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Transitions in Emerging Democracies

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Editor's Note

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Part One

This is the next to last issue of the *New England Journal of Public Policy* before we usher in the new millennium. In the coming year the word itself will go through many uses, many permutations of meaning, be subject of so much tendentious punditry, idiotic speculation, inane commentary, and pompous prognostications that it will have been sucked dry of meaning, and we will be left with a plethora of "millennium specials" and "the top one hundred of the millennium" in everything from cat food to human diet fads, and of course your perennial millennium "special sales" and "personalities of the millennium."

And being the next to last issue of the journal in this century, it will also be a first of its kind: a venture into the global village to ascertain how or whether we, as a species, are improving the ways in which we govern ourselves, the lives of the six billion-plus inhabitants of this small planet, in securing the liberty and freedom of the individual, the primacy of law and dispensation of justice, the enhancing of human potential, the provision of work for the able, the construction of the groundwork for a better life for all — dignity and respect, freedom from hunger, tolerance, adequate shelter, elimination of illiteracy, proliferation of the new literacy, ending dictatorial and authoritarian rule, promoting the inviolability of human rights, stemming the flow of hundreds of millions of refugees who live in little more than badly upgraded concentration camps, countryless and uncared for except for the unstinting efforts of underappreciated and underfunded nongovernmental organizations and the like, and improving the health and sanitary conditions in which three-quarters of the world is mired in cycles of disease and poverty, in making some headway in closing the gap between the rich and the poor.

All of which, in this strange new world of ours, will have an impact on the way we live in New England.

In the past twenty years, we have been suffused with words and phrases like *globalization*, *democratization*, *free and fair elections*, *emerging markets*, *participatory democracy*, *consensual decision-making*, and a proliferation of other catchphrases that suggest improvement in governance systems both *within* countries and *between* countries, yet the improvement more often remains in the promise, not in the reality.

In particular, in this issue we will look at the experiences of countries that have undergone or are trying to undergo the transition to democracy from either totalitarian or authoritarian regimes, or some dictatorial point in between to what we call free-market economics with all the accouterments of democracy. I use the word *accouterments* deliberately, since what constitutes the "accouterments" necessary for democracy has come under increasing scrutiny as societies, once the scourge of civil libertarians and advocates of human rights, try to abandon old ways and become members in good

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standing in the new global order. Notions of what constitutes national sovereignty are more problematic than ever, and one person, one vote does not necessarily a democracy make.

Even in this limited regard there is a wry irony. The century began with Herbert Asquith, leader of the Liberal Party in Britain, campaigning successfully for the abolition of the veto powers of the House of Lords. (At the time, legislation could be passed by the House of Commons, whose members were elected by the people, but it could be vetoed by the House of Lords, composed for the most part of hereditary peers. The century ends with Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair introducing legislation to abolish whatever residual voting powers, mostly delaying powers, hereditary peers have.) Were an African country to vest such powers in, say, traditional chiefs for the better part of a century, it would be pilloried by the fastidious custodians of democracy, themselves often paragons of moral rot and obsequious decay, for its dereliction in adhering to “proper” democratic norms. In politics, no matter how wide one cuts the swath, what’s good for the goose is not necessarily good for the gander.

Nor, of course, can notions of democratic governance be divorced from notions of economic empowerment of the masses and sustainable development in poor countries, which constitute the greater number of the countries under study in this issue. For years, they have been instructed by the mandarins in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank how to run their affairs. Maintain a stable currency to attract foreign exchange. Keep inflation low. To attract foreign exchange flows, especially in the form of fixed inward investment to stimulate growth, cut government expenditure and reduce the ratio of the budget deficit to gross domestic product (GDP) to some arbitrarily chosen figure, which means that when the technical jargon is decoded those countries are left with social safety nets full of holes. In short, get the government out of the way and the market in all its glorious manifestations will allocate resources efficiently and productively and for the benefit of all.

If matters start to go a little awry, either through circumstances beyond their control, or failure to hold government expenditure in check, or to strike a balance between monetary and fiscal policy, or widespread inefficiency, lack of capacity or bountiful corruption, they are “encouraged” to jack up interest rates to maintain the stream of capital inflows necessary to keep the foreign exchange rates pegged at their current levels. Exorbitant interest rates, unfortunately, choke off economic growth, leaving borrowing countries damned if they do and damned if they don’t. Naughty countries get slapped with structural adjustment programs that punish the wicked and leave them even more indebted to their would-be benefactors. (This regimen of deficit cutting and anti-inflationary measures that have been the hallmark of IMF structural adjustment programs since the 1980s is called, for want of better nomenclature, “the Washington consensus.”)

Jeffrey Sachs put the matter very succinctly.

The IMF bought into the investment bankers’ mantra: exchange rate stability above all else. If central bankers devote their reserves to a defence of the exchange rate, and if the IMF dedicates its funds to a defence of the central banks, lending to emerging markets is like shooting fish in a barrel. Or so it seemed — until a stampede began in the other direction.

The IMF encouraged central banks from Jakarta to Moscow to Brasilia to raise interest rates to catastrophic levels to protect their currencies, lest they lose the confidence of the money managers. Of course, the money managers could see one step beyond the IMF: investors do not gain confidence when short term rates are

pushed to dozens of per cent, as they have been in Russia, South Korea, South Africa, and Brazil at some points this year. Yet the more these countries tried to defend their currencies, the more they incited panic.¹

One model — the prize exhibit, so to speak — of how a developing democracy should run its affairs — the Asian model with its Thailand and South Korea and Indonesia — the pride and joy of the international supra-sovereign financial institutions — has, alas, collapsed.

The implications for these countries in terms of the *regulatory reform* they will have to make in their *financial service institutions*, are as important, if not more important, than the *structural reforms* they will have to make in their *governance practices* if they are to weather the ruin that rained down on their economies in the last eighteen months. Or perhaps there will be a growing realization that structural reform in the public and private sectors are intertwined, that regulation and transparency are necessary to both, that there is a symmetrical relation between the two. They are quintessential sides of the same coin. You can't flip just one side of the coin and leave the other in the palm of your hand.

Some years ago, Francis Fukuyama argued in *The End of History and the Last Man*² that with the collapse of communism and the triumph of capitalism, the battle for "ideas" was over, and that in that sense we had arrived at the cul-de-sac of history itself — a millennium of peace and prosperity was at hand with the emergence of pan-global liberal capitalistic democracy.³ The fact that such a preposterous hypothesis could be taken seriously, never mind being the subject of countless conferences, seminars, workshops, and reams of befuddling gibberish, is perhaps as good an indicator as any that the more outrageous the thought the more seriously it is taken, and that the predicaments we now face in world markets are as much a result of our consummate hubris as the unpredictability of the future.

Until recently, the collective wisdom assured us that free-market capitalism plus a decent dollop of democracy had finally routed all other forms of economic and political organization. But with the Asian economies somersaulting from boom to bust, and the financial equivalent of AIDS — appropriately named "contagion" — infecting one economy after another, inducing the collapse of financial markets in dominolike fashion as the system imploded under the weight of its inherent contradictions, the triumph of free-market capitalism has been called into question. Does the emperor ever have clothes? History, it seems, has not quite finished with itself — or us.

Traditional remedies have proved ineffective, leading one of the world's more eminent advocates of free markets, Paul Krugman, to publicly address the vexed question of the emperor's clothes.⁴ Should we, he asks, given the seriousness of the current crisis, not temporarily "scupper" reliance on the market.⁵ Traditional economic nostrums simply haven't worked, he argues. If an afflicted country raises interest rates and taxes to protect its currency, economic growth comes to a grinding halt, and even fundamentally sound companies are brought to ruin. If instead a country caught in the vortex of a downward spiral keeps interest rates low and lets its currency collapse, it will trigger capital flight and inflation. What Krugman suggests is heresy to free-marketeers: "[The only way out] is a solution so stigmatized," he writes, not with the conviction of a convert but with the resigned doggedness of one who must follow his own conclusions to their logical end, "that hardly anyone has dared suggest it."⁶ The unsayable words are "exchange controls."⁷

Globalization and the onward march of the free market, guided by the mysterious,

even divine wisdom of the Invisible Hand, have made nation-states virtually irrelevant; we queue up to apply for our visas to enter this new global village, where the pastures are greener, the land more fertile, and there is room for all to flourish. All this is, as events of the last year so vividly illustrate, an extension of the end-of-history hype, erroneous in the extreme, even subversive in the sense that rather than proving to be an instrument that would reduce disparities in income and wealth distributions between nations, it has proved itself an adept instrument for the opposite.

Many of the assumptions underlying democratization that were articles of faith in the mid-eighties and early nineties would be regarded, and rightly so, as sheer hogwash in the era of the global marketplace and instantaneous capital flows. Others, still part of the received orthodoxy, require a thorough reexamination. Emerging democracies, especially those in Africa, and more especially those in sub-Saharan Africa, devastated by war, famine, disease, and without even the pretense of a tarred road, to say nothing of an infrastructure, or parts of Asia and Latin America with low incomes and no savings, have little or no control over their economic fate in a free-for-all market system. They are the procession of ghosts that follow their funeral corteges, the sad echoes of their hollow frames a dirge to the victims of travails beyond their own making.

II

Last September, much of the world waited with apprehensive anticipation to see how Alan Greenspan, chairman of the United States Federal Reserve Bank, would act to deal with the global financial crisis threatening to plunge the world into recession. It may as well have waited for Godot. Which in itself is a sufficient commentary on who is the ultimate arbiter of what's good for the world, never mind individual countries, of who should suffer the "pains and arrows of outrageous fortune," the consequences of the fallout of decisions made by rapacious speculators, opportunistic financial institutions, and countries that have become old hands at manipulating the IMF and its ilk. Borrowing heavily puts the onus for repayment not on the borrower but on the lender. The threat of large-scale default with the "contagion" it spreads, is the best weapon borrowers have for further assistance to preclude economic meltdown, a form of blackmail in which the continued viability of an interdependent world economy makes the strong beholden to the weak.

But blackmail, insidious creature that it is, has a penchant for enmeshing blackmailer as well as blackmailed in its greedy claws.

III

There is an increasingly invoked view that an IMF bailout does little for the poor and the underclass in a stricken country, but is of most assistance to the First World creditor banks and currency speculators whose self-serving actions are often responsible for the country's dire predicament in the first place. As long as First World banks and investors can count on an IMF bailout to countries that go into an economic free fall, they have a safety chute that enables them to make risky loans and investments without having to worry about the consequences of their financial transactions going wrong, and the countries that can rely on the IMF as the lender of last resort have little incentive to reform their often crony-oriented banking systems and address the corruption that corrodes their economies.

The IMF itself has come under increasing scrutiny since 1998. In the year since the

start of the Asian crisis in September 1997, the IMF disbursed \$120 billion in international bailouts. One year later, all the countries it had attempted to rescue from the financial holes they had dug themselves into with such careless abandon were in worse shape. IMF prescriptions, or other IMF conditions for loans, had only exacerbated the economic woes of the countries in question. Thailand, Indonesia, Korea, and Russia, rather than being out of intensive care, were still struggling to survive on IMF respirators that were themselves experiencing severe power outages. After its massive disbursement of funds, the IMF had less than \$10 billion on hand to contain future contingencies and found itself going, cap in hand, to tap a line of credit to the tune of \$24 billion from the ultimate lender of last resort, a faceless entity operating under the suitably anonymous cover of the General Arrangement to Borrow.

In terms of policy, the organization, once the oracle before which poor countries humbled themselves in trepidation, is becoming the focus for severe criticism. To prescribe for any one country tight monetary policy which leads to higher interest rates, cuts in government expenditure, and a reduction in consumer demand might be the correct “treatment” for the ailing patient; but when every patient swallows the same economic medicine at the same time, the result is a collective overdose: Jonestown-like deflation. Unless an antidote is quickly found for resuscitation a worldwide slowdown will further harden the global economy’s arteries and recession will litter the landscape with dead economies.

Economics asphyxiating on the last whiffs of financial oxygen are clutching desperately at the empty canisters. One feature of the global economy in the final year of a century not particularly distinguished for its regard for human life, is that technology has in fact made human labor replaceable as a factor of production in ever increasing areas of economic activity, and most tyrannically in emerging markets or those for which the word *emerging* is an aspiration well beyond their reach. One-third of the eligible workforce in the world is either unemployed or underemployed, that is, there are at least one billion people across the globe who cannot provide the wherewithal for their own survival or the survival of their families.⁸ Nor will they ever be in a position to do so. Economic growth is increasingly of the non-job creating kind. The problem the world faces as it straddles the cusp of the twenty-first century is what to do with people.

“For its swiftness and confounding of experts, the evaporation of the Asian ‘economic miracle’ probably ranks only second to the unraveling of soviet socialism as the greatest surprise of the last half century,” says Walden Berro, a member of the Social Research Institute at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok.⁹ And with the evaporation of the miracle some of the world’s most cherished shibboleths regarding *the building blocks for economic growth* and the *consolidation of democratic governance* crumbled as the foundations upon which they were constructed collapsed in the financial mud slide that swept away everything in its accelerating path.

What should have been of most immediate concern is why the international financial institutions — the IMF and the World Bank in particular, institutions which had guided and in some cases been the prime movers in the remarkable transformation of these economies — could have been so uncomprehending of what was happening around them, so inept in their forecasting, so blind to the fault lines at the economic seams of these countries, so impercipient of the financial practices that flourished under their very noses, and yet so dogmatically sure of themselves when it came to prescribing the “adjustments” countries the world over, especially the poorer ones, would have to put

into practice before they could receive the aid vital to keeping open their lifelines to the rest of the global economy, could have gotten it so wrong, that the collapses across Asia, which send one-quarter of the global economy into recession, found them flat-footed, bewildered, and at a loss to give a reason for it all, until, of course, they discovered in hindsight that the symptoms of imminent disintegration were there all the time, only we were too busy applauding success to see the rotten apple at the core.

We were treated to the wise words of the senior IMF official who told the Royal Academy of Morocco that Indonesia was within reach of eliminating poverty. Four months later the World Bank's Indonesia specialist was predicting that up to one in four Indonesians, or some 50 million people, might lose their jobs in a catastrophic economic meltdown.¹⁰

Or more incomprehensible still: the IMF, in its 1997 annual report, wrote that "directors welcomed Korea's continued macroeconomic performance [and] praised the authorities for [its] enviable fiscal record."¹¹ Three months later, the Korean government was negotiating with the same IMF for a \$57 billion bailout to prevent the world's eleventh largest economy from going down the global drain.

Or who was held to account in the IMF, that most circumspect of organizations for the most noncircumspect report that "in [Southeast Asia], the region is poised to extend its success into the twenty-first century and governments still have a major role in driving this process"? This confidence was rooted in "the region's strong macroeconomic principles, in [Southeast Asia's] tradition of, and commitment to, efficient allocation of investment, and in the widespread belief that the external environment would continue to be supportive."¹² Less than a year later, the IMF decried Asia's "fundamentals" as severely wanting. The crisis, it argued, was "mostly home-grown."

The "Asian Tigers," the IMF's models of probity, before their ignominious implosions, for all emerging markets, were now harshly condemned for the laxity of their banking systems, and a new phrase, "crony capitalism," was coined to describe their disgrace. The tigers were quarantined, confined to their cages before the contagion could spread. But the damage was done; the red meat of their financial entrails poisoned, and the contagion spread: hence the fear and loathing in other emerging markets.

Some analysts sought more profound meanings:

After all [they expostulated], capitalism is supposed to excel at allocating investment funds efficiently. In this case, it didn't. *The deeper explanation is that market capitalism is not just an economic system. It is also a set of cultural values that emphasizes the virtue of competition, the legitimacy of profit, and the value of freedom. These values are not universally shared. Other countries have organized economic systems around different values and politics.*

As a result, spreading capitalism is not simply an exercise in economic engineering. It is an assault on other nations' culture and politics that almost guarantees a collision.. Even when some countries adopt some of the trappings of capitalism, they do not embrace the basic values that make the system work. This is what happened. Led by the U.S., global agencies (the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund) sought to persuade poorer countries to become more open to trade and global capital. These countries tried to maximise the benefits of the process while minimizing changes to their politics and commerce. [My italics]

Thus:

Mutual deception flourished. Countries like Korea and Russia pretended that they had. American, European, and Japanese bankers, executives, and government

officials pretended the claims were true — or might become true. Loans were made on the basis of incomplete or faulty statements. Or they were made on the faith that, if a loan went sour, someone (the government, the IMF) would cover the losses.¹³

And thus:

Global capitalism has become a dangerous hybrid. On the one hand, investors committed huge sums and expected high returns. On the other, the money often went — through bank loans, bond issues, and stock offerings — to borrowers who were not operating according to the strict rules of efficiency or profit and loss. Crony capitalism often meant corruption: contracts won with bribes; favoritism for the well-connected. In 1997, a group called Transparency International ranked corruption in fifty-two countries as judged by global executives and country specialists. Not surprisingly, Russia ranked fourth, Indonesia seventh, and Thailand fourteenth.

But capital flowed freely, and self-deception prevailed. Banks collected interest on loans. “Emerging market” mutual funds rose, because local stocks were buoyed by new investment money. While everyone enjoyed profits, there was a suspension of belief. Now comes the reckoning. Capital flight has forced most developing countries to conserve scarce foreign exchange.

Countries cannot expand their economies unless they replenish their foreign exchange reserves of hard currencies.¹⁴

Not much mention is made here of the fact that every time the IMF bails out one more emerging market economy that has hit the economic dust, it is using the tax dollars of the developed world, not to bail out the countries in distress but the commercial financial institutions in the developed countries that made the questionable loans in the first place. Thus, the commercial loans of financial institutions in the First World to emerging markets are virtually risk-free, since if things go sour, they can count on the IMF to step in and more or less secure their “bad” loans, while the cost of the defective and unwise decisions of these supposedly free-market institutions are channeled via taxpayers in the wealthy countries through the IMF onto the backs of the miserable millions in the poor countries, once the beneficiaries of Western financial largess, who have to shoulder the burden of the stringent repayment conditions the IMF attaches to making the bailout loans. Something is wrong here — not merely wrong but, if one were conspiratorially inclined, deviously wrong. The poor ultimately pay for the mistakes of the rich.

IV

Some of the variables that had yet to make their full weight felt.

First, whether the turnabout in the fortunes of the yen assumes a critical mass that conveys a permanence. A stronger yen is the precise antidote for Asia’s malaise, for unless Pacific Rim exports become more competitive, thus taking the pressure off China to devalue and boosting the buying power of Japanese consumers, recovery of any substantial extent will remain problematical.

Second, the reform of Japan’s banking system must be seen to be getting off to a real start. Japan’s government has committed itself to injecting \$600 billion into the banking system, a sum that is equal to almost all of Japan’s bad loans. But many are dubious, and if past practices are anything to go by, the well-chronicled pattern of false starts feeds skepticism.

However, the known but unacknowledged and unspoken fact is that Japan’s banks are

bankrupt, with bad loans and defaults amounting to one trillion dollars – an amount equal to roughly 25 percent of gross national product (GNP). (For a comparative yardstick use the Savings and Loans crash in the late 1980s in the United States.) The bailout, huge though it was, amounted to 2 per cent of GNP. If the Japanese government were to “refinance” the banking system, it would drive the country into a possible depression, and as goes Japan, so goes the rest of Asia.

The impact of the world’s second largest economy going belly-up, followed by pervasive depression throughout Asia, which accounts for one-third of the world’s output, would, at the least, induce recession in the United States, and most probably in the rest of the world. If Japan were to try to deal with its banking crisis by calling in loans due from the United States, Europe, and much of the rest of the world — it is in the ironic position of having a banking system that is functional only in name while being the world’s largest creditor nation — banks all over the world would teeter and fall as they would be unable to cover their repayments, thus triggering a worldwide recession, which in the long-run would do little to help Japan.¹⁵

Third, after the IMF and twenty of the world’s richest countries reluctantly (the fact that they did so reluctantly was a harbinger of eventual failure) agreed to finance a \$41.5 billion loan package for Brazil in return for massive austerity cuts on the parts of the Brazilians (Brazil’s foreign reserves had fallen from \$75 billion to \$43 billion between August and November 1998), the deal did not close the financial dikes, and two months after the bailout was put together, Brazil’s currency, the real, was effectively devalued by 8 percent: the repercussions will be felt throughout the Americas, including Mexico, Venezuela, Chile; indeed, in all countries with weak current account balances. And the repercussions will be felt in the United States. The question again is whether the consequences will “merely” envelop most of the Americas in a recession or whether an impending financial implosion might trigger an economic meltdown. One way or another, the question will lure speculators, once again emerging from their safe havens.

Fourth, the most watched, and befittingly the least open to scrutiny: What will happen in China? Despite its continued insistence that it would meet the targeted growth rate of 8 percent for both 1998 and 1999 and that devaluation of the yuan, which would trigger a new financial panic in East Asia, is out of the question, all indicators point to a severe economic slowdown. A growth rate of even 4 percent this year or next would, in China’s circumstances, amount to a recession, given that every percentage point drop in GDP means 5 million more unemployed, that some reliable estimates already predict 18 to 20 million unemployed within a year, a recipe for political unrest.¹⁶ In addition, there are signs that China’s financial institutions are becoming a little unstuck. China’s banks are burdened with bad debts, both to state enterprises and to property speculators, made during the boom days of the early 1990s. Many state enterprises are themselves bankrupt and face closure, unpalatable though that course of action is to the Chinese.¹⁷

A devaluation of the Chinese yuan or the Hong Kong dollar would devastate Asian markets, crushing their efforts to pick themselves up following the East Asian debacle, send the usual “shock waves” through the developed world, harden predictions of a global recession to the point where the near certainty attached to the predictions create situations in which the predictions become inevitable certainties, and lead to a global crisis of liquidity. In these circumstances, or even less consequential ones, as the bite of economic slowdown begins to clench its teeth on the West’s economies, developed countries will do what is best for themselves — the resuscitation of foreign markets to absorb their exports and cushion unemployment will be the first order of business, and

hence an even more ambitious emphasis on pulling Asia, in particular, and the more important emerging markets in the Americas out of their quagmires.

V

In the face of overwhelming poverty, exacerbated by AIDS, the devastation of endemic wars, dysfunctional education, the virtual nonexistence of electricity, sanitation, and clean water, rudimentary and unhygienic health care, recurrent famine, Africa owes some \$227 billion to international creditors, which amounts to about \$600 for each person on the continent. Of the forty-one most heavily indebted low-income countries in the world, no fewer than thirty-four are in sub-Saharan Africa.

In 1996, the World Bank and the IMF announced a plan to reduce the debt burdens of the world's poorest countries. Two years later, a confidential report to the World Bank's executive board said that "considerable progress had been made."¹⁸ One shudders to think what the World Bank might construe as lack of progress. Some forty countries, again mostly in Africa, were sufficiently poor and indebted to qualify for assistance under the 1996 debt-relief plan. Of those, ten have had their cases reviewed, and six, three of which were African — Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Mozambique — have been promised help.

Only one, Uganda, has had any debt forgiven. And only a handful more will qualify for aid before the end of the century, despite the bank's having agreed to relax its restrictions at the September 8 meeting to enable countries which had put economic reform programs in place by 2000 to become eligible for assistance, thus opening the door for war-torn countries such as Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, and Sudan. However, even with the relaxed restrictions in place, and assuming that all debt-relief conditions are met — a big assumption, only a handful of countries will receive any relief by the end of the century.¹⁹

One reason is that debt relief raises the cost to creditor governments, and about half is owed to rich-country governments which also pick up much of the outstanding debts of multilateral institutions that lack the resources to do so themselves. The cost to creditor countries would become much greater if the pool of countries eligible for benefits is further increased.

Moreover, with large and economically important areas slowly succumbing to the impact of the global financial crisis, the effects of which may take two years to work its way through the global market, developed countries have become more circumspect. Adding to the caution and uncertainty is the huge cost of financing the bailout of Brazil, the increasing uncertainty regarding Brazil's capacity to meet its obligations under the bailout, continuing economic and political instability, which can only worsen, and the looming crisis in China.

Unfortunately, the less developed emerging markets or the undeveloped markets of the rest of the world, the world of the chronically poor and for the most part forgotten, will not be part of recovery programs, because not having had much to begin with, there is little to recover, and there is no comparison between the short-term return on one billion dollars spent on debt relief or one billion dollars spent in bailing out the markets that count.

This leaves South Africa, for example, in a no-man's-land. An emerging market, yes, but one that has not lived up to its potential and shows little signs of doing so, especially as it has to contend with recession in an election year in which the election

results will be more pivotal than the elections in 1994 since they will point to the direction of South Africa's future well into the twenty-first century. But also an emerging market surrounded by some of the poorest countries in the world, hostage to the uncertain, or in a number of cases, the absence of a future in many, to the endemic strife that the continent seems unable to stem, and with a culture of corruption that has led many donor countries to abandon their efforts to help when the only real tangible results of relief is the enrichment of elites and the further impoverishment of the masses.

In *How Africa Was Brought Low*, an essay for the African Renaissance Conference, Dr. Peter Ewang writes:

Bilateral and multilateral organizations have made certain policy interventions as a direct precondition for loan effectiveness. However, these activities ignore the fact that in African countries the constraints for development are not caused solely by economic factors but by institutional weakness, low-level social awareness, education, and health care.

Most of the time the constraints have been ignored. Nowadays decisions are dominated by or influenced by international organizations with very limited technical and socio-cultural expertise and insight concerning African countries. Development is something that means something distinctly different to those being developed and those doing the developing. The economic structure of African countries has been developed not to feed their own people but to meet the import needs of development that have made Africa a site of recurring famine, unpayable debts, and in need of a renaissance.

There is ample evidence that international development programmes have failed in most of the African countries. Since 1980 Africa has received billions of dollars as aid through development programmes, yet Africa today produces less food and has more hungry people. It is no coincidence that over the past decades, some of the largest recipients of the USA and the former Soviet Union's aid in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Sudan, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Somalia, and Angola, have been nations where war, famine, and hunger are most common.

At best the aid programmes of the past were not effective, at worst they have been part of the problem. Development has often helped destroy people's ability to feed themselves. Offers of food pour in but obtaining financial resources for rehabilitation is usually difficult. Dumping food as relief has not solved the developmental problems of Africa. Food aid extended by developed countries, following devastating famines caused by civil strife and natural calamities, has adversely affected the capacity of the continent to deal with its problems. Generally food aid programmes have introduced a harmful spirit of submissiveness and dependency into these poor societies and inefficiency and corruption into governments of most of these countries.

The hunger and debt caused by the huge debts are difficult to accept. Governments in Sub-Saharan Africa have been pressured by the IMF and the World Bank into implementing structural adjustment programmes in order to acquire loans for development. These countries are made to pay their debts by surrendering the bulk of their export earnings, leasing out valuable resources at throwaway prices to earn extra income, and sacrificing social and environmental considerations to earn enough to pay their debts.

Many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa owe more money today than they did ten or twenty years ago. In fact, in 1992 African external debt had reached \$290 billion, about 2.4 times greater than in 1980. In the Sub-Saharan African countries alone the debt increased from \$6 billion in 1970 to \$243 billion in 1994. The big question is why the big institutions (the World Bank, IMF, and others) let this unbearable debt accrue.²⁰

That such an essay should be one of the showcase features introducing the conference is cause for reflection. The insinuation is that developed countries not only plundered Africa in the past but continue to do so in the guise of development programs, which although ostensibly tailored to the needs of the country in question are in effect instruments of measured interference, designed to service the needs of the developed countries. Even humanitarian aid — food to alleviate famine — is viewed in a sinister light. For every dollar given in aid, there is a condition, an unspoken agenda to mold the economies of the poorer countries according to the dictates and, needless to say, advantage of the donor country.

The essay is an expression of anger at developed countries: at their hubris, their “we-know-it-all” attitude; their condescension inherited from the lingering sense of conquest and the unstated but silently held conviction that things were better in “their” day. Indeed, even today, and perhaps to a greater degree in the post-Cold War era, former colonial powers vie with one another for “parental” control over what used to be “their” Africa, and when the children are naughty, they are not above sending in their troops to sort things out, all under the pretense of having to “protect” their citizens who are still residents of whatever godforsaken piece of earth is being scorched in the interests of some tin-pot dictator or the would-be usurper of his much coveted position. It is a manifestation of deep resentment of the developed countries’ self-perceived sense of going out of the way to help, at the altruism they smother themselves in, when the help really only makes recipients more roiled that they have to turn to their former “masters” or clones of their erstwhile masters for help in the first place; bitterness that the help encourages a culture of helplessness, thus fostering the dependency the help is supposed to eradicate.

It is noteworthy, too, for what it fails to say. That every other country in large swaths of the continent is embroiled in civil conflict or party to the civil conflicts of others; that famine is often self-induced; that food relief is used as a weapon to leverage concessions from the enemy; that food is often withheld from the starving and mysteriously finds its way into the hands of the warmongers; that corruption is pervasive.

Given that many of Africa’s conflicts have their roots in borders arbitrarily drawn by conquering powers with little regard to natural alignments, ethnic demarcations, or history, and that fears of domination by one ethnic group, often justified, are never far from the surface, that natural disasters have taken an inordinate toll, that the 12 million refugees who are permanently homeless — and countryless — have nowhere to go and create a permanent source of instability in the region, and that indebtedness cripples the prospects for development, one can easily empathize with the rage of Africa.

But the failure of Ewang to acknowledge that Africans may have anything to do with the plight they are in, that the actions of their elites or of those who stoked ethnic antagonisms and fanned the flames of hatred for personal ambition, of those who looted their countries of their wealth on a scale almost unimaginable to imagine, who have exploited their own people to a degree that not even the colonial imperialists of the past could match, to fail to hold Africa accountable for many of the ills that beset it is to sink into the self-pity that is the hallmark of the submissiveness and dependency he goes to such great lengths to warn against.

Commenting on the renaissance conference, Thabo Kobokoane observed that “the conflicts plaguing Africa did not dominate the proceedings.” (In the past year, one of four countries in Africa was engaged in conflict; half the worldwide deaths occurred in Africa.)

Surely discussion on these wars and rebellions should have been at the centre of any debate about a reawakening Africa? After all, it is the continent's all-too-familiar problems that fly in the face of a so-called renaissance; a massive stumbling block to those who will eventually oversee its regeneration.

Yet to the bulk of African Renaissance delegates, the festering conflicts did not appear important. [An equally] pressing question that needed addressing concerned the nature of Africa's governments. How will the African renaissance "movement," an essentially private-driven initiative, relate to those states that have no tolerance of civil society?²¹

VI

The Gini coefficient is the standard tool for measuring the degree of inequality in a society. On a scale of 0 to 1, where 0 represents absolute equality and 1 absolute inequality, South Africa currently ranks second in the world in terms of income inequality with a coefficient of 0.58; only Brazil, with a coefficient of 0.63, ranks worse. According to one argument, countries in the throes of development should undergo an increase in levels of income inequality, since growth by its very nature is an uneven process, and hence the inequities to which it gives rise are a function of growth itself — a dynamic process in which the variables that drive it are themselves changing at differential rates — important components of growth such as the movement of labor from less productive sectors of the economy to the more productive, patterns of migration from rural areas to urban areas, the distribution of capital with a preponderance going to capital-intensive industries, the unequal rates of technological change, the gestation of "new" industries, all ensure that inequalities increase as society is in a perpetual state of transformation.

It is not unsurprising therefore that Gini coefficients tend to be highest in the emerging economies — Chile (0.56), Panama (0.57), Thailand (0.46), Malaysia (0.56), and closer to South Africa, Zimbabwe (0.57) and Kenya (0.58). On the other end of the scale, countries with the highest degrees of inequality tend to be the poorest countries, trapped in unbreakable chains of pervasive poverty — Bangladesh (0.28), Rwanda (0.29), and Laos (0.30).²² The capitalist view: "inequality, despite its perceived inequity, is nothing more than growth in progress."²³ Which would appear to suggest that the greater the degree of inequality, the more growth in progress, and that if we value growth, we should be prepared to tolerate the inequalities it breeds.

The transfer of technology may also increase inequality. Although some innovations benefit the worst off, much technological progress raises the marginal products of those who are already more productive. Even when it does not, the opportunity cost of public investment in technology might be forgone investment in antipoverty programs. By increasing output, however, these investments can benefit the entire society. The potential trickle down, however, is not necessarily rapid or comprehensive.²⁴

VII

If the white view of inequality is that white affluence relative to blacks is not attributable to white exploitation of blacks, which has contributed to the relative and absolute poverty of blacks, then South African Deputy President Thabo Mbeki's argument that there are two nations in South Africa — one white and well off, the other black and poor — is lost on whites and one more instance of the refusal on the part of whites to

acknowledge the damage that apartheid did, especially in confining the education of blacks to a level that ensured that they could not rise above a certain functional level — of serving as the human fuel for the white industrial machines and as the underground excavators of the mineral wealth that enriched the white fraternity. If whites cannot bring themselves to see — and acknowledge — that they exploited blacks in the past, and especially under apartheid, then the future for improved race relations is bleak, and an increasingly resentful black elite will seek retribution through the means whites fear most — redistribution through taxation. How can one speak of nation building when the people who are supposedly the rudimentary core of the nation engage each other with such silent enmity?

VIII

In the United States, unchallenged in its role as the global economy's financial policeman, Alan Greenspan's decisions reflect U.S. interests, in this case how best to balance the country's vulnerability to deflation in markets that are of most concern to it, that are destinations for its exports against the risks of inflation at home which would result from increasing the money supply, thereby triggering a reduction in interest rates. It was universally agreed — as if universal agreement on anything counts for much in a world in which the capacity to produce instantaneous information on any issue at any point far outweighs the capacity of its recipients to assimilate it — that the concomitant domino effects which would follow a cut in interest rates in the United States would save many countries from free fall into recession.

What kind of New World Order are we building when the economic fate of the struggling countries that account for the overwhelming proportion of the world's population lies in the hands of a reserve bank that makes its decisions on rates reduction on the basis of what's best for the United States, not on the basis of what is best for the world economy, on the basis of how deflation in many parts of the world would impinge on American interests and open the economy to possible exposure to the deflation virus, on the basis of what's good for America is good for the rest of the world, an indicator of the hubris of a country which has had to suffer the least, and whose response to addressing the increasing disparities in world inequities is to cut the relatively small percentage of GDP it contributes in aid to distressed nations struggling to emerge from centuries of oppression and exploitation. (It already contributes the least — at 0.11 percent of GDP, it ranks at the bottom of the list compared with what other developed and the upper tier of developing countries contribute, and it has steadfastly refused to pay its arrears to the United Nations.)²⁵

To talk of the need to build multiparty democracies in such circumstances or to go on millimeter-measuring exercises to determine whether a country is slipping from being a one-party dominant state to a one-party state would be farcical were they not so pervasively practiced by the savants of the United States' perceived national interest.

(Former national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, who refers to America's allies and friends as "vassals and tributaries," argues the case for a grand geostrategy that would "prevent collusion and maintain security dependence among the vassals, keep the tributaries pliant and protected, and keep the barbarians from coming together."²⁶ And David Rothkopf, a former senior member of the Clinton administration, in a burst of moral fervor and patriotic humility was moved to write that "Americans should not deny the fact that of all the nations in the world, theirs is the most just and

the best model for the future.”²⁷ The proposition that we have reached the end of history still has its adherents; history, it seems, is somehow synonymous with the American destiny.)

Indeed, when Greenspan made the “by-the-way” acknowledgment before the U.S. Senate on September 22, 1998, that Reserve Bank policymakers were fully aware of the widening financial crisis that had spread from Asia to the rest of the world and its impact on the U.S. economy (“Deteriorating foreign economies and their spillover to domestic markets have increased the possibility that the slowdown in the growth of the American economy will be more than sufficient to hold inflation in check”),²⁸ financial analysts profoundly proclaimed that this was the clearest indication yet that Greenspan would fight the prospect of a spreading recession by lowering U.S. interest rates. Asian markets soared, and some of the capital that had fled some of the more sophisticated emerging markets in search of safer or more lucrative rewards returned to local bourses. In South Africa, the rand recovered to close the day’s trading at R5.8 to the dollar — the “symbolic” R6.00 to the dollar benchmark had been breached, and in the euphoria that followed many market analysts predicted a quick recovery, overlooking the fact that not too long ago an exchange rate of R5.00 to the dollar was cause for the market to develop a severe case of the jitters.

In the event, when Greenspan did make his “momentous” decision, he cut the Reserve Bank’s prime rate 0.25 percent, well below anticipation and already well discounted in the markets. The result: “An immense cloud of despondency hung over local markets as the Johannesburg Stock Exchange all share index took a further 3.337 percent tumble . . . and the rand once again slid relentlessly against the dollar, breaking through the R6 barrier.”²⁹ So much for euphoria and its afterglow.

What annoyed, frustrated, indeed angered other countries, especially the emerging markets, was Greenspan’s seeming myopia or indifference, or worse, ignorance regarding what was happening in the world around him.

Greenspan’s second intervention in the market in October, when he unexpectedly cut short-term interest rates by another quarter of a percent, the second such cut in the space of sixteen days, had at least the salutary benefit of being unanticipated. Its impact was not prematurely discounted in the markets and therefore was a more effective booster to market indexes, bringing with it the usual clamor of the collective pundits that the worst was behind us, and “recovery” — How can one talk of recovery when the full extent of the illness has not yet been fully diagnosed? — was on the way. Besides, when a person of Greenspan’s preeminence is so unnerved by market developments that he finds himself publicly admitting that “I’ve never seen anything like this,” when the oracle himself starts to eat — gobble — humble pie, it behooves policymakers everywhere to hold their breath — and their appetite. Interest rate cuts in other countries — Britain, Spain, Canada, China, Japan, and Ireland — provided a floor to cushion or forestall global recession. But Germany continued to resist a cut, creating sufficient uncertainty to keep the edge of volatility in the ascendant.

Greenspan’s surprising remark is precisely the issue. Why had he been blind to what had been so apparent to the rest of the world for some time? Some months ago economist Lester Thurow wrote,

Fear is rising and so is anger at do-nothing Americans . . . Having been at financial and economic conferences in Latin America, Asia, and Europe in the past few weeks, I find enormous anger at the entire United States. The rest of the world

believes that an enormous economic hurricane is building up its strength and that the captain of the ship, the ship's senior officers, and those who ride in first class aren't paying attention to the dangers that are developing . . . They feel we are just not focused on the dangers that are about to strike inland and lay waste the global economy.³⁰

This, of course, is why Alan Greenspan's first quarter of a percentage point cut in interest rates was greeted so negatively in the world capital markets, and why he had to make an emergency second cut just two weeks later, and why he had to promise that he was thinking of yet a third cut in the not-too-distant future.

To the rest of the world, that trivial first cut first looked as though Greenspan did not know what was going on. The economic hurricane was about to arrive, and he, as the leader of the world's central bank of last resort, was not willing to signal with a big interest rate cut that, if necessary, he would provide the world with the liquidity the world's markets needed to avoid a disaster. He did not seem to understand that issues are no longer those of fine-tuning inflation but avoiding a global meltdown.

Thurrow concludes,

When fear takes over in the financial markets, they fall apart very rapidly. Fears are now growing like mushrooms. How big will the {worldwide} bank losses be? How many more huge losses like those at Long-term Capital Investment will suddenly appear? How many more countries like Russia and Malaysia are simply going to let their companies violate [the pledges] they have signed and not force them to repay legitimate debts? What happens if the stock market goes down and Americans begin to cut back on their spending? What happens if Japan fails to continue to deal with its problems? Rational or irrational, fear is clearly on the rise.³¹

And imagine the fear if Brazil's much touted bailout becomes seriously derailed.

The signs that something is clearly out of kilter are everywhere. Policymakers make statements as though hermetically sealed from each other. In the world's respected financial organs legends like "US begins to catch a cold,"³² "China crisis,"³³ "A world in the woods,"³⁴ "currency vacuum: gaping hole at the centre of the G7's plan to prevent recurrence of the recent financial crisis,"³⁵ "Turmoil hits US consumer confidence,"³⁶ "Global bulls suffer crisis of confidence,"³⁷ "Russia's bleak future,"³⁸ "US consumers score negative savings rates,"³⁹ "Ominous symptoms of recession are apparent,"⁴⁰ "Yen deposit rates fall to below zero,"⁴¹ "Chancellor paints gloomy world picture,"⁴² and on the same page of *The New York Times*, "Greenspan Sees Calming of Markets" and "Growth in Jobs Slowed Sharply Last Month,"⁴³ "Chinese Investment Trust Defaults on Bond Payments, Stirring Fear,"⁴⁴ "Fears over Brazil roll-over,"⁴⁵ follow each other helter-skelter and the United States continues its roller-coaster ride on the markets, sure that "God's in his heaven — All's right with the world."

Globalization is here to stay, Thabo Mbeki somberly informed the Non-Aligned Summit. The crisis South Africa faced, indeed that they all were facing, was not of their own making; rather it was a case of their being caught in the fallout following the collapse of the Asian markets. "The stark reality," Mbeki concluded, "is that the power to influence markets lies exclusively in the hands of those who dominate those markets, which we, even collectively, do not."⁴⁶

In October 1998, the glitterati of the financial world gathered in Washington, D.C., at the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to discuss what was now being routinely described as the worst financial crisis to engulf the world economy in fifty years. What lent gravitas to the occasion was the fact that the

crisis they had gathered to discuss was never supposed to happen. Hadn't the integration of global capital markets, the sophistication of the instruments that allowed for risk diversification management, disclosure requirements, financial regulation and supervision, the omnipresence of rating agencies, the plethora of complex risk models, real-time transactions, and instantaneous communications prevented the kind of collapse that was gathering speed as they pondered the question: What had gone wrong?

Great minds knitted their brows and looked for fairy-tale remedies. But there were none. In symposiums, workshops, plenary sessions, and one-on-ones, the mighty and the not-so-mighty clustered together, applying their collective wisdom to unraveling the monetary mess that was causing financial gyrations in world markets and threatening economic chaos. It was as if the free market had gotten away from them, had discovered that its power was unbounded, that the unfettered movement of rapacious capital, as it zigzagged from market to market and from markets to havens of shelter, could devour whole economies, yet find its appetite still insatiable, searching in apoplectic fits and starts for the carcasses of other bankrupt countries.

"This year, as currencies and bourses have crashed and people in the more damaged economies have taken to the streets," writes Paul Bell, "the moral and theoretical pendulum of political economics has begun to swing away from the neo-liberalism prescriptions of the Thatcher/Reagan era, and back toward the social democratic construct that was displaced by Thatcherism and is being reasserted now under a new neo-Keynesian rubric of 'people-centered' development."⁴⁷

In Asia state driven capitalism had long been held up to other emerging economies (not least South Africa) as the best available model of rapid growth and poverty reduction. But the crisis first exposed in the world in Thailand and South Korea a year ago is discovered now to be long in the making as was the mythology of the myth of their success. While the Asian economies were growing at 6–8 percent a year, who cared that the *chaebols* were overprotected, or cronies overrewarded, or financial institutions under regulated and increasingly reliant on short-term investment, or profits directed away from R&D into the overheated property markets of those countries?⁴⁸

Part Two

In Helsinki, Finland, on January 7, 1998, Joseph Stiglitz, senior vice president and chief economist of the World Bank, delivered the 1998 WIDER Annual Lecture, *More Instruments and Broader Goals: Moving Toward the Post-Washington Consensus*. This was, of course, months before the full dimensions of the Asian crisis had brought a wave of devaluations in its wake, before the full impact of "Asian contagion" had made itself felt, before the collapse of the Japanese banking system, before many currencies went into free fall, their economies littered with the detritus of economic collapse.

In the course of his remarks, he offered the following "world view," a glance, as it were, into "new world thinking," or a thinking man's guide to how to put the brakes on a free-market capitalism about to go berserk, an ax murderer abroad in a kindergarten.

His thoughts:

- The Washington consensus held that good economic performance required liberalized trade, macroeconomic stability, and getting prices right. Once the government dealt with these issues — essentially, once

the government “got out of the way” — private markets would allocate resources efficiently and generate robust growth. But the policies advanced by the Washington consensus were not complete, and they were sometimes misguided.

An admission that the mandarins of Washington, D.C., might on occasion screw it up? A dent in the aura of infallibility?

- Making markets work requires more than just low inflation; it requires, inter alia, sound financial regulation, competition policy, and policies to facilitate the transfer of technology and to encourage transparency.
- The Bank’s understanding of the instruments to promote well-functioning markets had improved. They had broadened the objectives of development to include other goals, such as sustainable development, egalitarian development, and democratic development.

What, might we timidly ask, did the Bank consider to be the “objectives of development” before lightning struck on the road to Damascus?

- Since the financial crisis the East Asian economies had been widely condemned for their misguided economic policies, which were seen as responsible for the mess in which those economies found themselves. Some ideologues had taken advantage of the current problems in East Asia to suggest that the system of active state intervention is the root of the problem. They kept pointing to the government-directed loans and the cozy relations between the government and the large *chaebol* in the Republic of Korea. In doing so, they overlooked the successes of the past three decades, to which the government, despite occasional mistakes, had certainly contributed. These achievements, which included not only large increases in per capita GDP but also increases in life expectancy, the extension of education, and a dramatic reduction in poverty, were real and would prove more lasting than the current financial turmoil.

And this was only January 1998. What would these “ideologues” be saying in January 1999, as the Republic of Korea remained mired in recession, and the chaebols remained as resistant to restructuring as they did a year ago?

- The heart of the current problem, at least in East Asia, in most cases is not that government has done too much in every area but that it has done too little in some areas. In Thailand the problem was not that the government directed investments into real estate; it was that government regulators failed to halt it. Similarly, the Republic of Korea suffered from problems including overlending to companies with excessively high leverage and weak corporate governance. The fault is not that the government misdirected credit — the fact that the current turmoil was precipitated by loans by so many U.S., European, and Japanese banks suggests that *market* entities also may have seriously misdirected credit. Instead, the problem was the government’s lack of action, the fact that the government underestimated the importance of financial regulation and corporate governance.

- The current crisis in East Asia is not a refutation of the East Asian miracle. The basic facts remain: no other region in the world has ever had incomes rise so dramatically and seen so many people move out of poverty in such a short time.
- East Asian governments, for instance, were running budget surpluses; inflation was low and, before the devaluations, was falling. The origins of the current financial crises lay elsewhere and their solutions would not be found in the Washington consensus.
- The focus on inflation had detracted attention from other major sources of macroinstability, namely, weak financial sectors. In focusing on trade liberalization, deregulation, and privatization, policymakers ignored other important ingredients, most notably competition, that are required to make an effective market economy and which may be at least as important as the standard economic prescriptions in determining long-term economic success.
- Other essential ingredients were also left out or underemphasized by the Washington consensus. One, education, had been widely recognized within the development community; another, improvement of technology, had not received the attention it deserved.
- The success of the Washington consensus as an intellectual doctrine rested on its simplicity: its policy recommendations could be administered by economists using little more than simple accounting frameworks. A few economic indicators — inflation, money supply growth, interest rates, budget and trade deficits — could serve as the basis for a set of policy recommendations. Indeed, in some cases economists would fly into a country, look at and attempt to verify these data, and make macroeconomic recommendations for policy reforms all in the space of a couple of weeks.

Who are these people??

- There are no easy-to-read thermometers of the economy's health, and worse still, there may be trade-offs in which economists, especially outside economists, should limit their role to describing consequences of alternative policies. The political process may actually have an important say in the choices of economic direction. Economic policy may not be just a matter for technical experts!

Poor nations have to put up with the clap-trap of these "outside" economists for decades, and worse yet, have had to eat their words, even when the words stuck in the craw.

- The Washington consensus's messages in two core areas are at best incomplete and at worst misguided. While macrostability is important, for example, inflation is not always its most essential component. Trade liberalization and privatization are key parts of sound macroeconomic policies, but they are not ends in themselves. They are means to the end of a less distorted, more competitive, more efficient marketplace and must be complemented by effective regulation and competition policies.

How many countries in Africa, and underdeveloped parts of the Americas and Asia,

have suffered the consequences of such insufferable hubris and found themselves endlessly at the short end of the IMF stick? And for what?

- *Controlling inflation.* Probably the most important policy prescription of the stabilization packages promoted by the Washington consensus was controlling inflation. The argument for aggressive, preemptive strikes against inflation is based on three premises. The most fundamental is that inflation is costly and should therefore be averted or lowered. The second premise is that once inflation starts to rise it has a tendency to accelerate out of control. This belief provides a strong motivation for preemptive strikes against inflation, with the risk of an increase in inflation being weighed far more heavily than the risk of adverse effects on output and unemployment. The third premise is that increases in inflation are very costly to reverse. This line of thought implies that even if maintaining low unemployment were valued more highly than maintaining low inflation, steps would still be taken to keep inflation from increasing today in order to avoid having to induce large recessions to bring the inflation rate down later on. All three of these premises can be tested empirically.
- The evidence has shown *only* that high inflation is costly. When countries cross the threshold of 40 percent annual inflation, they fall into a high-inflation/low-growth trap. Below that level, however, *there is little evidence that inflation is costly*. High inflation is, on average, deleterious for growth. Recent research suggests that low levels of inflation may even improve economic performance relative to what it would have been with zero inflation. Controlling high- and medium-rate inflation should be a fundamental policy priority, but pushing low inflation even lower is not likely to significantly improve the functioning of markets.

What false gods have we been serving? And for whom?

- In 1995, more than half the countries in the developing world had inflation rates of less than 15 percent a year. For these seventy-one countries controlling inflation should not be an overarching priority. Controlling inflation is probably an important component of stabilization and reform in the twenty-five countries, almost all of them in Africa, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union, with inflation rates of more than 40 percent a year. The single-minded focus on inflation may not only distort economic policies, preventing the economy from living up to its full growth and output potentials, but also lead to institutional arrangements that reduce economic flexibility without gaining important growth benefits.

Yet, why this fixation with inflation? Why does it not drive the engine of policy in the developing countries, but in the developed ones? Has it become an election mantra, trotted out by bankers and businesspeople who know better?

- *Managing the budget deficit and the current account deficit.* A second component of macroeconomic stability has been reducing the size of government, the budget deficit, and the current account deficit. Much

evidence shows that sustained, large-budget deficits are deleterious to economic performance.

- There is no simple formula for determining the optimum level of the budget deficit. The optimum deficit, or the range of sustainable deficits, depends on circumstances, including the cyclical state of the economy, prospects for future growth, the uses of government spending, the depth of financial markets, and the levels of national savings and national investment.

So much for all those writ-in-stone deficit-to-GDP ratios.

- The optimal level of the current account deficit is difficult to determine. Current account deficits occur when a country invests more than it saves. They are neither inherently good nor inherently bad but depend on circumstances and especially on the uses to which the funds are put. In many countries the rate of return on investment far exceeds the cost of international capital. In these circumstances current account deficits are sustainable.
- The form of the financing deficits matters. The advantage of foreign direct investment is not just the capital and knowledge that it supplies, but also the fact that it tends to be very stable. In contrast, Thailand's 8 percent current account deficit in 1996 was not only large but came in the form of short-term, dollar-denominated debt that was used to finance local-currency-denominated investment, often in excessive and unproductive uses like real estate. More generally, short-term debt and portfolio flows can bring the costs of high volatility without the benefits of knowledge spillovers.
- *Stabilizing output and promoting long-run growth.* Ironically, macroeconomic stability, as conceived by the Washington consensus, typically downplays stabilizing output or unemployment. Minimizing or avoiding major economic contractions should be one of the most important goals of policy. In the short run, large-scale involuntary unemployment is clearly inefficient — in purely economic terms it represents idle resources that could be used more productively. The social and economic costs of these downturns can be devastating: lives and families are disrupted, poverty increases, living standards decline, and, in the worst cases, social and economic costs translate into political and social turmoil.

If 40 percent of the employable population is unemployed and another 20 percent underemployed, what impact does a "downturn" have on their lives? It's not the economy, stupid, it's jobs, jobs, and more jobs until they ooze out of every pore of the country's being. Poor countries don't have financial sectors, but they do have people.

- A growing literature, both theoretical and empirical, has emphasized the important microeconomic underpinnings of macroeconomic stability. This literature emphasizes the importance of financial markets and explains economic downturns through such mechanisms as credit rationing and banking and firm failures.

In the nineteenth century, most of the major economic downturns in industrial countries resulted from financial panics that were sometimes preceded by and invariably led to precipitous declines in asset prices and widespread banking failures. In some countries improvement in regulation and supervision, the introduction of deposit insurance, and the shaping of incentives for financial institutions reduced the incidence and severity of financial panics. But financial crises continue to occur, and there is some evidence that they have become more frequent and more severe in recent years. Even after adjusting for inflation, the losses from the savings and loan debacle in the United States were several times larger than the losses experienced in the Great Depression. Yet when measured relative to GDP, this debacle would not make the list of the top twenty-five international banking crises since the early 1980s.

- Banking crises have severe macroeconomic consequences, affecting growth over the five following years. During the period 1975–1994, growth edged up slightly in countries that did not experience banking crises; countries with banking crises saw growth slow by 1.3 percentage points in the five years following a crisis. Clearly, building robust financial systems is a crucial part of promoting macroeconomic stability.
- The importance of building robust financial systems goes beyond simply averting economic crises. The financial system can be likened to the “brain” of the economy. Financial markets serve a number of other functions, including reducing risk, increasing liquidity, and conveying information. All these functions are essential to both the growth of capital and the increase in total factor productivity.
- Left to themselves, financial systems will not do a very good job of performing these functions.
- The emphasis on “transparency” in recent discussions of East Asia demonstrates the growing recognition of the importance of good information for the effective functioning of markets. Capital markets, in particular, require auditing standards accompanied by effective legal systems to discourage fraud, provide investors with adequate information about the firms’ assets and liabilities, and protect minority shareholders. But transparency by itself is not sufficient, in part because information is inevitably imperfect. A sound legal framework combined with regulation and oversight is necessary to mitigate these informational problems and foster the conditions for efficient financial markets.
- Regulation serves four purposes in successful financial markets: maintaining safety and soundness (prudential regulation), promoting competition, protecting consumers, and ensuring that underserved groups have some access to capital. In many cases the pursuit of social objectives, such as ensuring that minorities and poor communities receive funds, as the United States’ Community Reinvestment Act does, or ensuring funds for mortgages, the essential mission of the government-created Federal National Mortgage Association, can, if done well, reinforce economic objectives. Similarly, protecting consumers is not only good social policy, it also builds confidence that there is a “level playing field” in economic markets. Without such confidence those

markets will remain thin and ineffective.

- The World Bank and others have tried to create better banking systems. But changing the system through institutional development, transformations in credit culture, and creation of regulatory structures that reduce the likelihood of excessive risk taking has proved more intractable than finding short-term solutions such as recapitalizing the banking system. In the worst cases the temporary fixes may even have undermined pressures for further reform. Since the fundamental problems were not addressed, some countries have required assistance again and again.

Translation: The World Bank and other international and supranational financial institutions have been a large part of the problem of the global predicament they now so grandiosely moralize about. Instead of becoming part of the solution, it was often more convenient to become part of the problem.

- The key issue should not be liberalization or deregulation but construction of the regulatory framework that ensures an effective financial system. In many countries this will require changing the regulatory framework by eliminating regulations that serve only to restrict competition but accompanying these changes with increased regulations to ensure competition and prudent behavior (and to ensure that banks have appropriate incentives).
- Even when the design of the desired financial system is in place, care will have to be exercised in the transition. Attempts to initiate overnight deregulation, sometimes known as the “big bang,” ignore the very sensitive issues of sequencing. Thailand, for instance, used to have restrictions on bank lending for real estate. In the process of liberalization it got rid of these restrictions without establishing a more sophisticated risk-based regulatory regime. The result, together with other factors, was the large-scale misallocation of capital to fuel a real estate bubble, an important factor in the financial crisis.
- It is important to recognize how difficult it is to establish a vibrant financial sector. Even economies with sophisticated institutions, high levels of transparency, and good corporate governance like the United States and Sweden have faced serious problems with their financial sectors. The challenges facing developing countries are far greater, while the *institutional* base from which they start is far weaker.
- Without the appropriate legal framework, securities markets can simply fail to perform their vital functions to the detriment of a country’s long-term economic growth. Laws are required to protect the interests of shareholders, especially minority shareholders.
- The focus on the microeconomic, particularly the financial, underpinnings of the macroeconomy also has implications for responses to currency turmoil. In particular, where currency turmoil is the consequence of a failing financial sector, the conventional policy response to rising interest rates may be counterproductive. Interest rate increases can lead to substantial reductions in bank net worth, further exacerbating the banking crisis. Empirical studies by IMF and World Bank economists have confirmed that interest rate rises tend to increase the

probability of banking crises and that currency devaluations have no significant effect.

This will be most reassuring to all those emerging markets, especially the likes of South Africa, which held their breath while Alan Greenspan held his serve! Not a single mention of the Federal Reserve Board?

- Advocates of high-interest-rate policies assert that such policies are necessary to restore confidence in the economy and thus stop the erosion of the currency's value. Halting the erosion of the currency, in turn, is important both to restore the underlying strength of the economy and to prevent a burst of inflation from the rise of the price of imported goods. This prescription is based on assumptions about market reactions — that is, what will restore confidence — and economic fundamentals. Ultimately confidence and economic fundamentals are inextricably intertwined. Are measures that weaken the economy, especially the financial system, likely to restore confidence?

South Africa, are you listening?

- Macroeconomic policy needs to be expanded beyond a single-minded focus on inflation and budget deficits; the set of policies that underlay the Washington consensus are not sufficient for macroeconomic stability or long-term development. Macroeconomic stability and long-term development require sound financial markets. But the agenda for creating sound financial markets should not confuse means with ends; redesigning the regulatory system, not financial liberalization, should be the issue.
- The fundamental theorems of welfare economics, the results that establish the efficiency of a market economy, assume that both private property and competitive markets exist in the economy. Many countries, especially developing and transition economies, lack both. Until recently, however, emphasis was placed almost exclusively on creating private property and liberalizing trade — trade liberalization being confused with establishing competitive markets. Trade liberalization is important, but we are unlikely to realize the full benefits of liberalizing trade without creating a competitive economy.
- *Facilitating privatization.* State monopolies in certain industries have stifled competition. But the emphasis on privatization over the past decade has stemmed less from concern over lack of competition than from a focus on profit incentives. In a sense, it was natural for the Washington consensus to focus more on privatization than on competition. Not only were state enterprises inefficient, their losses contributed to the government's budget deficit, adding to macroeconomic instability. Privatization would kill two birds with one stone, simultaneously improving economic efficiency and reducing fiscal deficits. The idea was that if property rights could be created, the profit-maximizing behavior of the owners would eliminate waste and inefficiency. At the same time the sale of the enterprises would raise much needed revenue.
- Although most people would have preferred a more orderly restructuring

and the establishment of an effective legal structure (covering contracts, bankruptcy, corporate governance, and competition) prior to or at least simultaneously with promulgations, no one knew how long the reform window would stay open. At the time, privatizing quickly and comprehensively, then fixing the problems later on, seemed a reasonable gamble. From today's vantage point, the advocates of privatization may have overestimated the benefits of privatization and underestimated the costs, particularly the political costs of the process itself and the impediments it has posed to further reform. Taking that same gamble today, with the benefit of seven more years of experience, would be much less justified.

- Many in the supranational financial institutions warned against hastily privatizing without creating the needed institutional infrastructure, including competitive markets and regulatory bodies. If, for instance, competition is lacking, creating a private, unregulated monopoly will likely result in even higher prices for consumers. And there is some evidence that insulated from competition, private monopolies may suffer from several forms of inefficiency and may not be highly innovative. In other words, why push ahead with privatization without promoting competition?
- The Washington consensus is right — privatization is important. The government needs to devote its scarce resources to areas the private sector does not and is not likely to enter. It makes no sense for the government to be running steel mills. But there are critical issues about both the sequencing and the scope of privatization. Even when privatization increases productive efficiency, it may be difficult to ensure that broader public objectives are attained, even with regulation. Should prisons, social services, or the making of atomic bombs (or the central ingredient of atomic bombs, highly enriched uranium) be privatized, as some in the United States have advocated? Where are the boundaries? More private-sector activity can be introduced into public activities (through contracting, for example, and incentive-based mechanisms such as auctions). How effective are such mechanisms as substitutes for outright privatization? These issues were not addressed by the Washington consensus. One must balance between the competing demands of private efficiency and public objectives.
- For much of this century people have looked to government to spend more and intervene more. Government spending as a share of GDP has grown with these demands. The Washington consensus policies were based on a rejection of the state's activist role and the promotion of a minimalist, noninterventionist state. The unspoken premise is that governments are worse than markets. Therefore the smaller the state the better the state.
- It is true that states are often involved in too many things, in an unfocused manner. This lack of focus reduces efficiency; trying to get government better focused on the fundamentals — economic policies, basic education, health, roads, law and order, environmental protection — is a vital step. But focusing on the fundamentals is not a recipe for

minimalist government. The state has an important role to play in appropriate regulation, social protection, and welfare. The choice should not be whether the state should be involved but how it gets involved. Thus the central question should not be the size of the government but the activities and methods of the government. Countries with successful economies have governments that are involved in a wide range of activities. In other words, the size of the state in the economy is not the issue; the issue is the manner of its involvement.

- More recently, there has been a growing recognition that the government and private sector are much more intimately entwined. The government should serve as a complement to markets, undertaking actions that make markets work better and correcting market failures. In some cases the government has proved to be an effective catalyst — its actions have helped solve the problem of undersupply of (social) innovation, for example. But once it has performed its catalytic role, the state needs to withdraw.
- There are two areas, among others, in which government can serve as an important complement to markets — building human capital and transferring technology.
- *Building human capital.* The role of human capital in economic growth has long been appreciated. The returns for an additional year of education in the United States, for example, have been estimated at 5 to 15 percent. The rate of return is even higher in developing countries: 24 percent for primary education in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, and an average of 23 percent for primary education in all low-income countries. Growth accounting also attributes a substantial portion of growth in developing countries to human capital accumulation. The East Asian economies, for instance, emphasized the role of government in providing universal education, which was a necessary part of their transformation from agrarian to rapidly industrializing economies.
- Left to itself, the market will tend not to provide adequate human capital. It is very difficult to borrow against the prospects of future earnings since human capital cannot be collateralized. These difficulties are especially severe for poorer families. The government thus plays an important role in providing public education, making education more affordable, and enhancing access to funding.
- *Transferring technology.* Studies of the returns for research and development (R&D) in industrial countries have consistently found individual returns of 20 to 30 percent and social returns of 50 percent or higher, far exceeding the returns for education. Most studies attribute the majority of per capita income growth to improvements in technical change. Robert Solow's pioneering analysis attributed 87.5 percent of the increase in output per man-hour between 1909 and 1949 to technical change. Another study provides strong evidence that per capita income in the Republic of Korea in 1990 would have been only \$2,041 (in 1985 international dollars) if it had relied solely on capital accumulation, far lower than actual per capita income of \$6,665. The difference comes from increasing the amount of output per unit of input,

which is partly the result of improvements in technology.

- Left to itself, the market underprovides technology. Like investments in education, investments in technology cannot be used as collateral. Investments in R&D are also considerably riskier than other types of investment, and there are much larger asymmetries of information that can impede the effective workings of the market. Technology also has enormous positive externalities that the market does not reward. Indeed, in some respects, knowledge is like a classical public good. The benefits to society of increased investment in technology far outweigh the benefits to individual entrepreneurs. Without government action there will be too little investment in the production and adoption of new technology.
- For most countries, especially developing countries not at the technological frontier, the returns associated with facilitating the transfer of technology are much higher than the returns from undertaking original research and development. Policies to facilitate the transfer of technology are thus one of the keys to development. One aspect of these policies is investing in human capital, especially in tertiary education. Funding of universities is justified not because it increases the human capital of particular individuals but because of the major externalities that come from enabling the economy to import ideas. Of course, unemployment rates for university graduates are high in many developing countries, and many university graduates hold unproductive civil service jobs. These countries have probably overemphasized liberal arts education. In contrast, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan (China) have narrowed the productivity gap with the leading industrial countries by training scientists and engineers.
- Another policy that can promote the transfer of technology is foreign direct investment. Singapore, for example, was able to assimilate rapidly the knowledge that came from its large inflows of foreign direct investment.
- *Making government more effective.* How can policies be designed that increase the productivity of the economy? Again, ends must not be confused with means. The elements stressed by the Washington consensus may have been reasonable means for addressing the particular set of problems confronting the Latin American economies in the 1980s, but they may not be the only, or even the central, elements of policies aimed at addressing problems in other circumstances.

In which case, one must reasonably ask, why are such policies still the practice rather than the exception? Why are they embarked upon by the IMF with such callous abandon without consideration to the human costs involved?

- Part of the strategy for a more productive economy is ascertaining the appropriate role for government, identifying, for instance, the ways in which government can be a more effective complement to markets. How can one make government more effective in accomplishing whatever tasks it undertakes? The empirical evidence indicates that *an effective state* is vital for development. Using data from ninety-four

countries over three decades, a seminal World Bank study shows that it is not just economic policies and human capital but the *quality of a country's institutions* that determine economic outcomes. Those institutions in effect determine the environment within which markets operate. *A weak institutional environment allows greater arbitrariness on the part of state agencies and public officials.*

- Given very different starting points, unique histories, cultures, and societal factors, how can a state become effective? Part of the answer is that the state should match its role to its capability. What the government does, and how it does it, should reflect the capabilities of the government — and those of the private sector. Low-income countries often have weaker markets and weaker government institutions. It is especially important, therefore, that they focus on how they can most effectively complement markets.

In short, especially in newly emerging democracies, governments must take account of the capacity of the government to effect change. But there is another dimension to change more fundamental than the capacity of the government, the capacity of the society itself to absorb change. But there is also a suggestion here that in low-income countries with both weak government institutions and weak markets, the government should serve as the “agent” of the market rather than the other way around. How does the market sit with democratic governance?

- Capability is not destiny. States can improve their capabilities by reinigorating their institutions. This means not only building administrative or technical capacity but instituting rules and norms that provide officials with incentives to act in the collective interest while restraining arbitrary action and corruption. An independent judiciary, institutional checks and balances through the separation of powers, and effective watchdogs can all restrain arbitrary state action and corruption. Competitive wages for civil servants can attract more talented people and increase professionalism and integrity.

In theory, not just laudable but more of the stuff of the “right thing.” But many of the countries whose initial steps to transition, some successful, some not, we examine in this issue have no institutions to reinvigorate. Corruption is not only endemic but culturally ingrained, a necessary habit for survival. Effective law enforcement agencies are nonexistent or part of the law enforcement problem. The judiciary is for all legal purposes extant. Institutional checks presuppose institutions exist.

- Governments are more effective when they respond to the needs and interests of their citizens, at the same time giving them a sense of ownership and stake in the policies.

Which governments, new to the trappings of power, do not begin with such “people-centered” principles? Which soon find the process of consultation and consensus building time-consuming, inefficient, and an obstacle to getting things done? When do the sheer burdens of trying to balance so many interests against so few resources sap the limited energy to provide that sense of ownership when, again, no institutional structures are in place to accommodate them and when the resources and capacity to build these institutions are woefully absent?

- *Broadening the goals of development.* The Washington consensus advocated use of a small set of instruments (including macroeconomic stability, liberalized trade, and privatization) to achieve a relatively narrow goal (economic growth). The post-Washington consensus recognizes both that a broader set of instruments is necessary and that the goals are also much broader. *We seek increases in living standards, including improved health and education, not just increases in measured GDP. We seek sustainable development, which includes preserving natural resources and maintaining a healthy environment. We seek equitable development, which ensures that all groups in society, not just those at the top, enjoy the fruits of development. And we seek democratic development, in which citizens participate in a variety of ways in making the decisions that affect their lives.*
- Knowledge has not kept pace with this proliferation of goals. We are only beginning to understand the relationship between democratization, inequality, environmental protection, and growth. What we do know holds out the promise of developing complementary strategies that can move us toward meeting all of these objectives. But we must recognize that not all policies will contribute to all objectives. Many policies entail trade-offs. It is important to recognize these trade-offs and make choices about priorities. Concentrating solely on win-win policies can lead policymakers to ignore important decisions about win-lose policies.
- The World Bank's East Asian miracle project was a significant turning point in the discussion. It showed that the stunning success of the East Asian economies depended on much more than just macroeconomic stability or privatization. Without a robust financial system, which the government plays a huge role in creating and maintaining, it is difficult to mobilize savings or allocate capital efficiently. Unless the economy is competitive, the benefits of free trade and privatization will be dissipated in rent seeking, not directed toward wealth creation. And if public investment in human capital and technology transfers is insufficient, the market will not fill the gap.

One principle that emerges from the ideas he discusses, Stiglitz concludes, is that whatever the new consensus is, it cannot be based on Washington. If policies are to be sustainable, developing countries must claim ownership of them. It is relatively easier to monitor and set conditions for inflation rates and current account balances. Doing the same for financial sector regulation or competition policy is neither feasible nor desirable.

The proof of the pudding, et cetera.

A second principle of the emerging consensus is that a greater degree of humility is called for, acknowledgment of the fact that we do not have all the answers. Continued research and discussion, not just between the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund but throughout the world, is essential if we are to better understand how to achieve our many goals.

Amen.

For the record: In the course of his remarks, Stiglitz mentioned the word *democracy* three times, the word *egalitarian* twice, *unemployment* once, *direct foreign investment* once. The key variables are institutional: the overriding importance of a “robust” financial sector, a strong and regulated banking system, a responsive institutional capacity, building institutional capacity and restraints on arbitrary action and corruption, the promotion of competition, a balanced approach to privatization, an effective state, the primacy of the market. In his analysis, institution building would appear to take precedence over governance strengthening.

Part Three

In *Making Democracy Work*, Robert Putnam argues that the successful evolution of civic traditions is what makes democracy work. He analyzes what happened in Italy when the Italian government transferred almost 80 percent of the national budget from the central government to the regional and local governments. He concludes that the only really certain indicator of the potential effectiveness of government at a given level is the number of clubs, social organizations, unions, and the like per thousand heads of population. In short, what counts is the density of the institutional fabric within a community. The more dense the institutional fabric per unit of population, the more effective the governmental unit that has jurisdiction over the people in the area in question.

According to Putnam, well-developed institutional fabric is itself the manifestation of value systems and horizontal relationships within the community in question. Mutual trust, respect, and cooperation between people within a community result in societal structures and arrangements that facilitate economic activity and good government and “empower” the individual; that is, economic development does not generate a strong social fabric; rather it would appear that a strong social fabric is a precursor for economic development. Unwittingly, we may have been putting the cart before the horse.

Such “healthy” social structures, he points out, have to be distinguished from other structures, vertical structures in which individuals rely not so much on themselves but on “authorities” above them and on cheating or using “the system” to their own advantage. This type of arrangement invariably results in patronage, clientism, dependency, and inefficiency — poor governance and social fragmentation. Putnam writes,

In areas of Italy long subjected to autocratic rule, the absence of a community sense resulted from a habit of insubordination learned from centuries of oppression.

Even the nobles had become accustomed to obstruction, and thought that governments could be fairly cheated without moral obliquity so long as the cheating was successful . . .

Instead of recognising that taxes had to be paid, the attitude was rather that if one group had discovered a profitable evasion, then the other groups had better look to their own interests.

Each province, each class, each industry thus endeavoured to gain at the expense of the community.⁴⁹

If one were to extrapolate Putnam’s findings to any of the countries included in this review, whether South Africa, the Philippines, Mozambique, Nigeria, Slovakia, El Salvador, Angola, Kenya, Nicaragua, Oromia, Cambodia, and even Israel, and any country emerging from a postconflict situation, the conclusions might be strikingly similar. Emerging from hundreds of years of colonialism, oppression, ethnic or ideological

strife, poverty-stricken, corrupt, with great disparities in wealth, with an under-abundance of resources, burdened by debt, they find themselves without the kind of institutional framework of which Putnam speaks. They lack a robust social fabric, in many cases a social fabric itself.

As they inch their ways into the twenty-first century, often blindly following paths of transition to forms of democracy that may be beyond their capacity to implement, buffeted by an uncaring world, fodder in a global economy, their concepts of sovereignty and national independence largely outmoded and illusory, their capacity to be “masters of their own fates” a thing of the past, their subjectivity to external constraints in almost every sphere of action further diminishing what they themselves can accomplish, at the caprice of whatever capital flows may arbitrarily, or perhaps more accurately, unwittingly, flatten their tin huts, their place in the pecking order of a more “genteel” global capitalism dependent on their obsequiousness in the face of its demands, they may wonder what this thing “democracy” is all about, and whether anyone ever heard of a level playing field, the supposed precursor for a more humane and equal world.

Or will the lesson of the next millennium be “To the victor belongs [all] the spoils”? ❀

Notes

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What Have We Learned About Postconflict Elections?

Larry Garber
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This article suggests that postconflict elections are a unique subset of transition elections which deserve special attention. The authors describe the evolution of postconflict elections, identify some of their more salient characteristics, and offer preliminary lessons drawn from the recent experiences.

Throughout the 1980s, the phrase “transition elections” was employed constantly by policymakers, democratic activists, and academic analysts. It generally referred to multiparty elections occurring after years of nondemocratic rule, often in countries with a prior history of democratic government. Elections in Argentina (1983), Uruguay (1984), Philippines (1986), South Korea (1987), Pakistan (1988), and Chile (1989) exemplify the transition election phenomena and were featured exhibits in Samuel Huntington’s notion of a worldwide third wave of democratization.¹

With the demolition of the Berlin wall in 1989, the transition election moniker began to be applied in three related, but somewhat different, settings: (1) initial elections in the former communist countries of the Soviet bloc, with the series of elections between March and June 1990 in East and Central Europe setting the stage;² (2) elections in several African countries, where previous experiences with formal multiparty electoral practices were quite limited; and (3) elections that were scheduled following the cessation of an internal armed conflict, often as an integral part of a negotiated settlement. It is this last category of elections that is the subject of this article.

Our principal thesis is that postconflict elections are a unique subset of transition elections which deserve special attention. Moreover, recent experiences with postconflict elections provide a wealth of lessons for policymakers and democratic activists.³ As we are constantly made aware, however, applying the specific lessons learned from previous experiences in the difficult context of negotiating the cessation of a conflict is no easy task.

Treating postconflict elections as a discrete subject has assumed increased importance as such elections have become the mechanism of choice for facilitating the passage from civil war to peace. Moreover, the occurrence of postconflict elections has become an important benchmark for the international community in assessing the institutionalization of a peace process. Both the fact that an election has occurred and the quality of the process have important implications for the withdrawal of international peacekeeping forces, for the allocation of scarce international assistance resources, for beginning the

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process of reintegrating a country that has been detrimentally affected by civil war into the community of nations, and for the creation of openings for external contacts, information flow, and human rights interventions.

Setting the Stage

The post–Cold War era has witnessed the rise of intrastate conflicts that have undermined the very foundation of the state, generated massive migrations, and inflicted widespread suffering on civilian populations. The collapse of the Soviet empire, the end of superpower rivalry, the growth of ethnic nationalism and worsening economic conditions in parts of Africa and elsewhere have undoubtedly contributed to this phenomenon. Ethnic and religious minorities, tribal groups, ambitious warlords, and marginalized and discriminated-against populaces have all raised the banner of revolt as they seek to redress grievances.

The ferocity that has characterized these intrastate conflicts has forced the international community to reassess various norms and practices that developed during the Cold War. While the contours of a new order are not fully settled, recent experiences have kindled a lively debate regarding such issues as forcible intervention in response to gross human rights violations, more aggressive responses to humanitarian disasters, and expanded notions of what peacekeeping operations might entail. Thus, paradoxically, the same factors that have contributed to intrastate conflicts have created conditions for their peaceful resolution.

As major international powers no longer see national conflicts from the prism of Cold War ideology, they have aggressively sought peaceful solutions to seemingly intractable and long-standing internal conflicts. The warring factions, meanwhile, bereft of outside support and suffering from growing war fatigue, have come under intense pressure to compromise. The recent spotlight on democracy and human rights has contributed a recognized framework for reconciling political differences. Consequently, several civil wars have terminated and the populations of a number of countries have once again begun breathing in an atmosphere of relative peace and reconstructing their shattered lives.

The Phenomenon Described

The 1989 elections in Namibia, although *sui generis* for a number of reasons, provided the impetus for much of the more recent developments involving the use of elections as part of a postconflict settlement. The story of these elections has been told in detail elsewhere, so it is summarized only briefly here.⁴ The approach utilized in Namibia was developed and authorized by the United Nations in 1978, but could be implemented only after the major antagonists, South Africa and South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), had fought to a standstill and the major powers no longer perceived any advantage in extending the duration of the conflict. The UN formula called for an extensive international presence in Namibia under UN auspices throughout the transition period.

Most relevant to the present subject, the UN Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) was responsible for "supervision and control" over the planned elections in Namibia. Supervision involved a hybrid between direct administration, which in Namibia was left to the South African colonial authorities, and a more passive monitoring role, which had

characterized the international community's involvement in many of the 1980s transition elections mentioned above. Nonetheless, the extensive nature of the supervision in Namibia deserves underscoring. On the ground, it involved the presence of more than 1,700 election supervisors and 3,500 military personnel in a country with a population of fewer than 2 million. More important, the UN had the responsibility to validate the overall electoral process, which was the keystone for ensuring a cessation of the conflict and the establishment of an independent Namibia. There was some recognition immediately after the Namibian elections that a new mechanism for resolving conflicts was perhaps emerging, but it required utilization outside the very special circumstances of Namibia for the approach to be fully appreciated.⁵

The 1990 elections in Nicaragua provided the next test. Years of intrastate conflict had resulted in a stalemate, but with the end of the Cold War there was a decrease in superpower interest. The Central American governments had initiated a peace process that placed considerable emphasis on the need to guarantee free and fair elections in each of the countries of the region. This time, however, elections were being planned for a member state of the United Nations, not a colonized territory. Nonetheless, the Nicaraguan government invited both the UN and the Organization of American States (OAS) to monitor upcoming elections. Both organizations responded by establishing long-term and large electoral monitoring teams in the country, marking the first time such extensive exercises had been undertaken in a sovereign state. The efforts of the UN and OAS teams, together with several nongovernmental organizations, contributed to an electoral process in which all the key parties participated, the voters for the most part had an opportunity to cast their ballots free of intimidation, and after some difficult negotiations, all parties accepted a process through which the ruling party was defeated.⁶

There followed a series of elections in Angola (1992), Cambodia (1993), El Salvador (1994), Mozambique (1994), Bosnia (1996), and Liberia (1997) in which the basic elements of the Namibia/Nicaragua, or postconflict election model, have been employed, with appropriate modifications for the particulars of the circumstances. Several other elections, including those in Haiti (1990 and 1995), Ethiopia (1992), South Africa (1994), West Bank/Gaza (1996), and Albania (1997), also share many of the characteristics of the postconflict election model. Its critical elements include (1) negotiation of a formal peace accord, which calls, *inter alia*, for a cessation of hostilities and the occurrence of elections within a fixed period; (2) intensive administrative preparations for the elections, involving negotiations concerning the legal framework, designation of the election administrators, registration of parties and voters, and arrangements associated with the procurement of appropriate electoral paraphernalia and its distribution throughout the country within the requisite time frame; (3) responding to an often tenuous security situation through the deployment of peacekeeping forces, civilian and police monitors, and the demobilization of armed factions; (4) providing for effective participation by refugees and displaced persons either by guaranteeing their safe return to their homes prior to the elections or through absentee ballot and related procedures; and (5) the extensive involvement of the international community in administering, supervising, monitoring, and otherwise assisting the process.

Perhaps the most important point that needs to be understood about postconflict elections is that they are invariably organized under very difficult circumstances, although the specific conditions differ from society to society, depending on the nature and duration of the conflict, previous levels of economic and political development, and the havoc wrought by the war. As a general rule, these postconflict countries are politi-

cally devastated, often with weak interim governments responsible for organizing the elections. Economically, the countries are characterized by high inflation, widespread unemployment, and shortage of essential goods. Many of the countries face food shortages, and their agricultural and industrial production is quite slack. Transport and communication infrastructures often are shattered, making the movements of people, goods, and information difficult.

Postconflict societies also lack the institutional infrastructure required for democratic elections. In many cases, a free press, independent judiciary, democratically oriented organized political parties, and an independent election commission are either just being formed or recovering from the physical, psychological, and financial consequences of war. Further, because of the conflict, a climate of social distrust, antagonism, and frustration exists in postconflict societies, which makes political discourse, much less democratic contestation, exceedingly difficult. In fact, the elections represent more a repudiation of the fighting than a choice among political alternatives, with the consequence that the elected government does not necessarily have a popular mandate for specific programmatic choices.

Finally, as noted above, the security situation often remains tenuous. For example, El Salvador is the only country mentioned in which demobilization of ex-combatants was completed prior to elections. In Angola and Ethiopia warring factions kept part of their armies clandestinely, while in Bosnia and Cambodia many parts of the country remained under the control of militia who had not reconciled to the peace process and were loyal to the parties contesting the elections. Consequently, the transformation of the politico-military organizations into democratic political parties was hardly complete at the time of the elections.

Efficacy of Postconflict Elections

In considering the efficacy of recent postconflict elections, it is important to be aware that they have often been expected to accomplish multiple objectives, some of which are not necessarily compatible. Like more conventional elections, postconflict ones are designed to result in the formation of a new and democratically legitimate government. However, they are also expected to consolidate a fragile peace by providing former combatants a legitimate arena for competition. Indeed, these elections are consciously viewed as mechanisms to transform violent conflicts into peaceful competition for power.

Of the recent postconflict elections, significant progress toward reconciliation has occurred in Namibia, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Mozambique; in these countries, the former warring groups have been integrated into the emerging political system. Bosnia enjoys relative peace but little reconciliation, and there is considerable concern that the peace can be maintained only with the continuing presence of a rather significant NATO force. The Cambodia situation is quite complex: the Khmer Rouge, who remain committed to the violent overthrow of the regime, have been marginalized, but new conflicts have arisen between the former coalition partners, and more combatants are under arms than when the peace accords were signed. While it is too early to draw firm conclusions from the situation in Liberia following the 1997 elections, recent events suggest that maintaining the peace will not be easy. Finally, fighting erupted in Angola immediately after its 1992 elections, and all efforts to reconcile the warring parties have so far failed.

A second objective of postconflict elections is to initiate a democratization process

within a country. It is assumed, often naively, that the conduct of reasonably free and fair elections generates a momentum toward further democratization and that leaders who assume power through electoral means will necessarily abide by democratic norms.

Here again, the record to date is mixed. While developments in several countries are encouraging, for example, Namibia, Nicaragua, and El Salvador, the experience in other countries where postconflict elections transpired is sobering. The 1997 events in Cambodia, where the coalition arrangement that had existed since the 1993 elections fell apart, highlight the gossamer nature of the democratic transition under way in many of the postconflict countries.

A third objective of postconflict elections is to signify a relatively political stability within a country, warranting the implementation of a massive economic reconstruction program with resources generated both internally and from donor agencies. Successful postconflict elections have generally achieved this purpose, with consequent positive economic growth. Given the devastation of the war, however, and the fact that serious economic planning is often placed on hold during the period between the peace signing and the occurrence of the elections, expectations for instantaneous economic improvements are extremely high among the population, and indeed among the international community, in the aftermath of the elections. These expectations pose an immediate challenge to a new government, which often must rely on the willingness of the international community to remain engaged rather than simply to declare victory and move on.

Role of the International Community

International assistance is essential not only for the organization of postconflict elections, but also to ensure their credibility and acceptance. The international community's extensive role in several postconflict elections, however, has challenged basic development principles regarding local ownership and empowerment. The justification for such far-reaching involvement is based on an absolute mandate to stop the killing, the recognition that failure to move ahead on elections may result in the breakdown of the peace, an acceptance of the international community, however defined in a particular circumstance, as a necessary mediator and prodder, and the desire to maintain the time commitments included in the peace accord.

The pattern and sequence of international electoral assistance has been straightforward, although there is considerable variation in the overall extent of the involvement. During peace negotiations, the international community may provide the services of legal luminaries and election experts to clarify critical issues regarding the nature and timing of elections. If peace negotiations are successful, an intergovernmental organization, such as the United Nations, Organization of American States, Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe, is often invited to take the lead in administering, supervising, or monitoring the elections.

Inevitably, international organizations assume greater roles and responsibilities than originally envisioned in order to solve pressing logistical, institutional, and political problems. The fine line between technical assistance and political intervention is thin indeed in the harsh realities of postconflict societies. Perhaps because of the number of situations requiring such assistance, the quality of expertise available to help organize or advise on the preparations for holding postconflict elections has improved immensely during the past decade. In fact, the elections in Bosnia demonstrate that even in the most difficult of circumstances, a technically adequate election can be achieved if the avail-

ability of resources is not a significant constraint.

The precise nature of the international engagement may surprise some not familiar with the phenomenon. The three post-Dayton Accords elections in Bosnia provide a current example of international community roles in ensuring timely elections. Dayton mandated national and municipal elections within nine months of the December 14, 1995, signing of the accords in Paris. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was assigned responsibility for supervising the elections as well as for monitoring human rights and verifying an arms reduction regime.

Unlike Namibia, supervision of the 1996 Bosnian elections became tantamount to administration. The seven-member Provisional Election Commission (PEC) was chaired by the head of the OSCE mission, and included three Bosnians and three other representatives of the international community. The PEC's international staff drafted the election law, procured the election materials, supervised the voter registration process inside Bosnia and in countries where Bosnian refugees resided, and developed the plan for the procurement and distribution of all election paraphernalia.

The OSCE chairman in office (CIO), meanwhile, was required by Dayton to certify that conditions in Bosnia were conducive to free and fair elections before the election date could be set. Notwithstanding the fact that several key elements of the accords had not been implemented, most notably relating to freedom of movement throughout the country and the return of refugees, the Swiss foreign minister, who was serving as CIO at the time, made the requisite certification in mid-June and authorized that the elections be scheduled for September 14, nine months to the day from the signing of the accords. Several weeks before the elections, however, the OSCE CIO and head of mission agreed to postpone the municipal elections while proceeding with the national elections.

By election day, more than 1,000 OSCE election supervisors were in Bosnia. An Elections Appeals Subcommission, which was headed by a Norwegian judge and staffed by lawyers and investigators seconded by foreign governments, addressed several critical and controversial issues before and after the elections. More than 30,000 NATO troops, who initially were directed to assume a detached perspective toward the election, eventually carried out key transportation and communication responsibilities, contributing immeasurably to the, relatively speaking, administrative success of the elections. And for election day, a separate OSCE team, numbering more than 1,200, was dispatched to the country to monitor the elections.

In most other circumstances, this extensive international involvement abated soon after the initial elections. However, Bosnia has proved more nettlesome, resulting in the same high degree of international involvement in 1997 municipal elections and 1998 national elections. These latter elections were noteworthy for the much improved administrative processes, for the more competitive nature of the overall campaign, and the more unconstrained environment in which the elections took place.

Admittedly, Bosnia reflects unique circumstances, much as Cambodia did a few years earlier, which had previously been identified as the most costly and extensive international engagement in a postconflict election exercise. In most other circumstances, the international community engagement has seemed modest by comparison. Nonetheless, even in these less extravagant settings, the international community role has been momentous and, usually, critical to the occurrence and success of the elections.

Mozambique offers an interesting contrast to Bosnia and Cambodia. Notwithstanding Mozambique's much more limited resources and a less explicit mandate, the UN and others in the international community ensured that the 1994 elections took place and

that all parties participated. Perhaps the most controversial aspect of the UN role in Mozambique was the provision of more than \$17 million to the political parties, ostensibly to provide them a basis for conducting a meaningful campaign, but viewed more cynically as an inducement to participate in the process.

Cost and Timing of Postconflict Elections

The cost of planning, organizing, and monitoring elections, given the extenuating circumstances affecting postconflict societies, tends to be comparatively high. The reasons for such high costs are understandable. As noted earlier, postconflict societies lack even the rudimentary transportation and communication infrastructure essential for holding nationwide elections. Undertaking nationwide voter education programs and establishing polling stations in remote areas are inevitably more expensive in these circumstances than in more traditional settings. Moreover, because peace is at stake and the international community is committed to supporting the elections, there is real pressure not to compromise the integrity of any aspect of the process. These factors often contribute to the utilization of electoral mechanisms that would be deemed inappropriate if the country were financing the election without international support. Limited industrial capacity necessitates that many basic electoral commodities — paper, pencils, boxes, typewriters, computers, and vehicles — must be imported at considerable expenditures. Resources are also needed to create minimal infrastructure for democratic elections; as in the case of Mozambique, the international community has provided assistance to struggling political parties to enable them to participate in the electoral process.

The high costs of postconflict elections raise several issues that deserve reflection. One obvious issue concerns the opportunity cost of the resources spent on postconflict elections. It has been suggested that these resources could be allocated instead to addressing the major social and economic problems facing these countries, including civilian security, repair of shattered physical infrastructure, and basic social programs such as health care and education for marginalized groups.

Another issue relates to the precedent for expenditure set by the postconflict elections. In the absence of outside assistance, many countries simply cannot afford to disburse a fraction of the resources spent to conduct the postconflict election on subsequent elections. At the same time, certain precedents have been created regarding the administrative processes, as well as sophisticated technologies, that were utilized during such postconflict elections. Thus, there is an expectation that international assistance will be provided to ensure a successful second and even third election. While in many circumstances such assistance has been forthcoming, an alternative would involve utilizing less resource-intensive administrative processes and technologies that are more appropriate to the economic and technological resources of the country.

A further factor that contributes to reliance on seemingly inappropriate administrative electoral mechanisms relates to the timetables established for organizing postconflict elections. These timetables, as observed above, are often dictated by political considerations rather than a rational assessment of the time necessary to prepare adequately for the elections. In several instances, the inevitable consequence has been a temporary postponement of the election, while in other situations the timetable was maintained at all costs, including those relating to the credibility of the process.

Among the adverse consequences associated with unrealistic election timetables is that the demobilization of combatants has often not been completed before elections.

Therefore, some political forces manage to maintain their military capabilities and, if the election outcomes are not to their satisfaction, they are in a position to resume a military offensive. This course of events happened in Angola, where the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) resumed the fighting after losing the 1992 elections, and in Cambodia where the number of soldiers loyal to the factions increased dramatically following the peace accords.

Rigid timelines often have, in addition, a negative consequence on the implementation of an effective civic and voter education program, thus constraining the potential democratizing impact of the elections. For example, intermediary organizations that sought to implement voter education programs in Angola, Ethiopia, and Mozambique found it extremely difficult to print literature, instruct trainers, and reach remote areas within the stipulated time frame.

Policy Considerations

There are two schools of thought regarding the increased reliance on postconflict elections as a tool for maintaining the end of an armed conflict. The first argues that notwithstanding one outright failure, Angola, and a few instances where there has been both progress and backsliding, Cambodia, the overall record of postconflict elections is positive. While appropriate lessons must be drawn from prior experiences and an understanding of the particular context in which the model is to be applied is absolutely critical, the form is sound and deserves to be at the forefront of the tools utilized by a negotiator trying to end an intrastate conflict.

The second school of thought is more skeptical of the overall record emerging from the experiences of the past few years. The high costs and rigid timelines associated with these elections have led to a search for functional alternatives, such as interim power-sharing arrangements, which might allow for the reconstruction process to begin without the immediate pressures of organizing and conducting an election.

While the limitations of postconflict elections must be understood, we are convinced that such elections will continue to figure prominently in future efforts to move beyond intrastate conflicts. With this reality in mind, we suggest that policymakers consider the following factors in assessing the prospects for a successful postconflict election: (1) the relative presence of democratic traditions and participatory social institutions such as voluntary associations, an emerging middle class economically independent of the state, independent media, and local political units; (2) the presence of ethnic cleavages and the nature of political mobilization, particularly the degree to which political mobilization relies on ethnic or sectarian appeals; and (3) progress toward demobilization of combatants, since this deters losing parties from abrogating the accords and relying on the military option for achieving power.

Once it is decided that an election process will form an integral part of a postconflict accord, the following policy considerations deserve note. First, the parties to the conflict should play an active role negotiating the electoral rules of the game rather than having these rules determined preemptively by an external actor; at the same time, an external actor may be required to ensure that the negotiations continue and to suggest approaches for breaking deadlocks. Second, the electoral rules and mechanisms should be kept simple to ensure that they can be easily understood by the populace and that they can be replicated in future elections. Third, a realistic timeline with objective benchmarks

should be employed, as the constant need to revise the timeline and postpone the elections serves as a confidence destabilizer and exacerbates feelings of suspicion and mistrust.

Fourth, the pre-election period should be used to rebuild those institutions which are critical to both meaningful elections and democratic consolidation; these institutions include an independent election commission, democratically oriented political parties, independent media, and nongovernmental organizations that are prepared to assume responsibility for monitoring the elections and conducting voter education programs. Fifth, given the degree of mistrust that often exists within a postconflict society, the introduction of confidence-building measures, which might involve authorizing the presence of international observers and requiring periodic certifications that conditions are conducive to free and fair elections should be employed during both the pre- and postelection periods.

Finally, the international community should recognize that a successful election process is only a step in a reconstruction effort, and that a long-term commitment is required following elections to sustain both reconciliation and democratization. Admittedly, recent practice has not necessarily conformed to this admonition. Too often the actions, as opposed to the rhetoric, of the international community reflect a shift back to "business as usual" rather than a sincere appreciation of the fact that restoration of trust and dignity among a population that has experienced a bitter intrastate conflict is never a short-term endeavor. ❀

Notes

1. See, for example, Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late 20th Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).
2. A succinct description of these elections is provided by Larry Garber and Eric Bjornlund, *The New Democratic Frontier: A Country by Country Report on Elections in Central and Eastern Europe* (Washington, D.C.: National Democratic Institute of International Affairs, 1992).
3. The most recent publications that present a comparative, empirical analysis of postconflict elections are: Krishna Kumar and Marina Ottaway, *From Bullets to Ballets: Electoral Assistance to Postconflict Societies* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Agency for International Development, 1997); Krishna Kumar, ed., *Postconflict Elections, Democratization, and International Assistance* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998); and Rafael Lopez-Pintor, "Reconciliation Elections: A Post-Cold War Experience," in *Rebuilding Societies After Civil War*, ed. Krishna Kumar (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997).
4. See National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, *Nation Building: The U.N. and Namibia* (Washington, D.C.: National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, 1990).
5. *Ibid.*, 74–82.
6. See Jennifer McCoy, Larry Garber, and Robert Pastor, "Poll Watching and Peace-making," *Journal of Democracy* 2, no. 4 (1991): 104–114.



Slovak Nationalism Model or Mirage?

Caroline Barker

In the face of an increasing number of bloody dissolutions of states around the world, the “velvet divorce” between Czechs and Slovaks has often been cited as evidence that such excesses can be avoided. This article, written before the October 1998 elections that saw the end of the government of Vladimír Mečiar, seeks to explain that the peaceful split of these two nations is not an instance that can be replicated elsewhere but grows from the unique nature of Slovak nationalism. The article traces the historical evolution of Slovak nationalism and challenges the view that it has ever been a dominant sentiment in Slovak society. The author argues that autonomy and democratic freedoms long appeared to be mutually exclusive in the Slovak experience and that it was the typical Slovak characteristics of resignation and obedience to authority that kept them from concerted rebellion. These same facets lay behind the quiet nature of the split with the Czechs in January 1993, which was never advocated by the majority of the population.

Frustration of national hopes is one of the basic features of Slovak history, and has done much to determine the Slovak “national character,” if one can speak of such a thing.

— Eugen Steiner
The Slovak Dilemma

Silence reigns. Somehow conversation has stalled, even though there are fourteen people in the room. They are all too lazy to speak and to think. They are content in their forgetting — in their indolent stagnation. Not even the child’s screaming troubles them. They’re content even if it screams — they’re content regardless.

— Božena Slančíková-Timravá
“Ďapakovci,” *Ďapakovci a Iné Poviedky*

In the aftermath of the Cold War, the “new world order” that was initially hailed with confident anticipation fast revealed itself as an illusion. New conflicts arose, ethnic groups launched new or reinvigorated struggles for independence, and a number of states that had long embraced different ethnic groups disintegrated. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the new states rising from the ashes of the Soviet Union and its Communist satellites. Former Yugoslavia was soon to imprint itself on the consciousness of publics around the world as the prime example of these “new” and disconcerting phenomena. Former Czechoslovakia became another oft-quoted case, an instance of how two ethnic groups could part ways peacefully. This, it appeared, was the model to be preached to others.

My aim here is to explain why the case of Czechoslovakia is a false light in the dark-

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ness, an example that is all too eagerly cited to prove the possibility for easy, peaceful solutions to the explosive potential of ethnic nationalism. This oversimplistic analysis is the result of a number of presumptions made about the nature of Slovak national sentiment. I seek to challenge some of these presumptions, arguing that the Slovak case requires a close examination of the Slovak experience of history, particularly since the mid-nineteenth century, and an understanding that this has left the Slovaks with a very ambiguous, even ambivalent, understanding of themselves as a nation. I suggest that this has both emerged from and reinforced certain national characteristics that might be termed resignation, apathy, provincialism, or disillusionment.¹

The Origins of Slovak Nationalism: Theories and Interpretations

In *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Anthony Smith distinguishes between theorists who see nationalism as a primordial phenomenon, according to which “national ties and sentiments are the ‘stuff of history,’” and those who take a modernist approach, seeing the nation as “a product of strictly modern developments like capitalism, bureaucracy, and secular utilitarianism.”² Whatever may be the case with other ethnic groups, it is all but impossible to argue the primordialist line in the case of the Slovaks. This is not to say that such attempts have not been made.

One Slovak historian who seeks to build a picture of the long history of Slovak national sentiment is Joseph Mikus.³ Although he lays stress on the events of 1848 and later, these are conveyed in terms of awakening the political consciousness of a national identity that dates back even as far as the Great Moravian Empire of the ninth century. Mikus tries to anchor Slovak identity deep within an innate Slovak mentality. He defines this most strongly in contrast to the Czechs to illustrate the fallacy of any argument that the two peoples are indistinct. In a remarkable statement that reveals his own nationalist feelings and motivations for this primordialist argument, Mikus writes,

The Czechs share with the Germans a certain lack of perception of political reality and sociability. A little factual detail, not without significance, which puts these two peoples on the same footing, is that they are both beer drinkers. In contrast to the Czechs, who are a psychologically “Nordic” nation, the Slovaks, facing, so to speak, towards the Danube plain, are “gens du midi” or southerners: they drink wine.⁴

Mikus contends that the Slovaks’ “centuries-old history proves eloquently that they also have a natural ambition for such a degree of political independence and statehood as the general political conditions prevailing in the Central European area allow them to achieve.”⁵ The truth of this statement lies more in the passivity that its latter half implies than in the historical ambition of its opening words, as I seek to show.

Stanislav Kirschbaum, another Slovak historian, takes a more moderate approach. He tends toward a position between modernism and primordialism. Not unlike Mikus, Kirschbaum believes that the cohesiveness of the Slovak nation owes its historical roots to the Great Moravian Empire, but only became an active force in the nineteenth century with the rise of the Enlightenment notion of “natural rights” to self-determination. He contrasts these natural rights that the Slovaks might claim with the perceived “historic rights” to autonomy of many other Central European peoples at the time — rights which consisted in “the possession of a state at one time or another in the area’s history, preferably in fairly recent times.”⁶ However, he also stresses the effects of economic

development and industrialization after the Second World War in uniting and mobilizing the Slovak people as a cohesive group.

Miroslav Kusý takes a distinctly modernist approach, reflecting Ernest Gellner's emphasis on the role of economic development in creating ethnic cohesiveness and generating ethnic mobilization. Kusý questions why the Slovak people galvanized in opposition to their subordination within Czechoslovakia only in the late 1960s, at a time when the repression was alleviating, not strengthening. He concludes that the key factors at play were the increased rate of industrialization in Slovakia and the resulting urbanization of the population as a whole. "Just as the process of homogenization of the Slovaks into a modern nation took place on these foundations, so too did the growth of their national consciousness. Precisely at this time, Slovaks as a truly mass, nationwide group became aware of themselves as a modern nation."⁷

So where does the truth lie? Have the Slovak people long formed a consciously aware nation with its "own language, the sense of belonging to the same family, [its] own historical space, and a common spirit which has formed its members both morally and intellectually?"⁸ Is it a phenomenon of the last two centuries, recently accentuated by industrialization, but with recognizable origins in more distant history? Or is real nationalism — taking the requirement of Liah Greenfeld and others that it be a truly mass movement to qualify as such — only perceptible since the Second World War? To these questions I add one further set. Just how strong has Slovak nationalist sentiment been at *any* time? Are the Slovaks a nation in Walker Connor's definition of "nation" as a group that is itself aware of its uniqueness? Or do they fall closer to Connor's definition of an ethnic group, or prenational group, characterized by a "rather low level of ethnic solidarity which a segment of the ethnic element feels when confronted with a foreign element, [a sentiment which] need not be very important politically and comes closer to xenophobia than to nationalism?"⁹

In seeking answers to these questions, I first examine those key events in Slovak history between 1800 and 1989 that are commonly cited by historians of the Slovak nation. These are the attempted revolution under the Hungarians in 1848; the formation of Czechoslovakia in 1918; the creation of an independent Slovakia under Nazi Germany in 1938; the Slovak National Uprising in 1944; the reconstitution of Czechoslovakia in 1945 followed by the Communist takeover in 1948; and the Prague Spring of 1968.

The Historical Prism: Reflection or Distortion?

Both Walker Connor and Benedict Anderson stress the power of the historical myth in creating and galvanizing national sentiment — the stories of historical homogeneity, achievement, survival, and greatness, which, whether true or not, can create the mass sense of belonging that underlies a nation. Kusý notes in an essay, "The Moral Sense of Historic Truth," that "every mass political movement, every regime, every national or state ideology has an existential interest in history: it struggles for historical justification, wants to make the history of its nation its own, to present itself as its sole lawful inheritor and perpetuator." He concludes, "In such a case, the issue at stake is far from being the scientific resolution of a technical historical question, or solid proof of an historical truth; it is the ideological consciousness of the nation, expressed in its historical self-reflection."¹⁰

In reviewing the events in Slovak history enumerated above, it is necessary to exam-

ine the various ways in which Slovak regimes and the Slovak people have interpreted them. These differing interpretations are well reflected in the analyses of Joseph Mikus, Stanislav Kirschbaum, Eugen Steiner, and Miroslav Kusý, on which I draw. It is only through understanding the complex intertwining of contradictory experiences and the ambiguous national value of the various historical models on offer that one can appreciate the sentiments that directed the course of those events and the ambivalences that they engender in retrospect.

1848: Muted Revolution

In 1848 a series of popular uprisings across Europe was driven by demands for varying degrees of national autonomy and democratic liberalization. Slovakia had been under the yoke of the Hungarian Empire since the tenth century, the nobility were Hungarian, and there was essentially no Slovak political class. Kirschbaum writes,

In the 800 years or so of coexistence between the Slovaks and Magyars, their relationship, at least until 1790, had not been fundamentally confrontational . . . While [the Slovaks] accepted the medieval order and identified with the Hungarian state — a fact that, until the nineteenth century, no Slovak writer ever questioned — the Magyar nobility in Slovakia not only learned to speak Slovak but also identified with the Slovak core, encouraged its culture, and often defended its interests.¹¹

This all changed with the Hungarian nineteenth-century policy of assimilating its minorities, inter alia through limiting the use of their languages in public life and focusing education on the Hungarian history and culture. This policy of active assimilation was known as Magyarization. Hence, in the 1840s, when the Hungarians rose against their oppressors, the Hapsburg Austrians, a small group of Slovak nationalists in turn rose against the Hungarians. Yet the redirection of Slovak loyalties was confused. Initially the Slovak leaders adopted a pan-Slavic policy in solidarity with the Czechs, Serbs, and Croats, which culminated in a Slav Congress in June 1848 in Prague. But when the Czechs pressed for some kind of political union with the Slovaks, the latter rejected the idea, preferring the prospect of direct rule from Austria. Toward the end of 1848 this group allied with the Austrians against the Hungarians. Yet throughout this period some Slovak peasants fought with the Hungarian, rather than the Slovak or Austrian, forces.

Kirschbaum estimates that in the most concerted Slovak operation of the period, in September 1848, the volunteer force numbered just 600 men, including students of other nationalities.¹² Kusý cites an estimate of only 300 volunteers, of whom no more than 50 were Slovaks. In his words, “This spark did not yet ignite the nation . . . a few fires of discontent on Slovak soil, a little tactical talk and basically unsuccessful negotiation with Vienna — that was all that was done and achieved.”¹³

Certainly Kirschbaum’s claim that the Slovaks were shown through these events to be “a nation that would fight for its survival” seems vastly exaggerated.¹⁴ Any nationalist motivations behind the events of 1848–1849 were espoused only by a tiny elite. As Kirschbaum admits, once feudalism was abolished by the Hungarians (following their defeat by Austria and Russia and internal reorganization), even those few Slovak peasants who *had* been caught up in the spirit of revolution quickly lost interest “and watched with indifference the victory of absolutism.”¹⁵ At most, Slovak engagement, beyond a few intellectuals, was a class or social phenomenon; in no way was it a national endeavor.

1918: Czechoslovakia: Slovak Goal or Foreign Imposition?

The First World War marked the occasion on which the Czech and Slovak diasporas first took a hand in determining the fate of their fatherlands. There had been steady and large-scale emigration from Slovakia to Canada and the United States since the 1870s, numbering some 30,000 per year, a third of whom are estimated to have subsequently returned. In October 1915, Czech and Slovak émigré organizations formulated the Cleveland Agreement, which proposed the creation of a federal state comprising the two nations. Under this arrangement, both Czechs and Slovaks would have considerable autonomy and territorial independence.

This goal of federation did find support only among the diaspora. The three main Slovak leaders at the time, Andrej Hlinka, Milan Hodža, and Milan Štefaník, were all pressing for a similar arrangement. Hodža and Hlinka were both signatories of the Martin Declaration of October 1918, in which cultural and political leaders of Slovakia signed up to the end of Slovakia's participation in the Hungarian Empire and the beginning of union with the Czech lands. Štefaník also worked closely with the Czech federalists, Tomáš Masaryk and Edvard Beneš, in finding support for this plan in the West. Although Štefaník and others insisted on an equal role of Slovaks in the new state, requiring that the movement's official organization in Paris change its name from the Czech National Council to the Czecho-Slovak National Council, they did not entertain the idea of Slovak independence. It was Štefaník himself who went to persuade the Slovak League of America to accept the federalist orientation. These efforts led, in May 1918, to the signing of the Pittsburgh Pact, which in fact promised a slightly lesser degree of linguistic and administrative autonomy to the Slovaks than its precursor in Cleveland.

Regardless of these agreements, when the federation became a reality at the end of the Great War, it was essentially imposed by the Allies "with the agreement of a handful of Slovak intellectuals."¹⁶ There was no plebiscite or apparent adoption of the arrangement by the Slovak people. Kusý points out that the one goal of the nationalists since 1848 had been to gain independence from the Hungarians, a negative definition of the ethnic nation based on a rejection of Hungarian hegemony. Instead of forming a positive definition of the ethnic unit as an independent, national state, such as other peoples in the region were seeking and achieving, "the Slovaks got [and appeared to accept] a substitute . . . the First Republic."¹⁷ This republic proved a disappointment even to some of its Slovak architects, as the promises of national equality made to the Slovaks were soon forgotten.

With the birth of the First Republic, the Slovaks achieved participation in a democratic state for the first time, yet by comparison with other groups in the region, they appeared to do so at the cost of their national autonomy. Štefaník became a national hero and remains a part of the history of Slovak consciousness to this day, an irony that is lost on neither Kusý nor Kirschbaum. Kusý writes, "Somewhere here is hidden the first national trauma, symbolized in the legend of Štefaník. This became an integral element of the Slovak national consciousness."¹⁸

1939–1944: Autonomy and Democracy: Ne'er the Twain Shall Meet?

The perceived loss of national autonomy in the formation of the First Republic was, for those elites who concerned themselves with it, a loss relative to the hopes and promises cultivated during the First World War and to the experience of neighboring nations in its aftermath. Relative to the Slovak experience under the Hungarians, Slovakia had indeed

gained some limited rights. However, the Second World War was to take the inverse relationship between democracy and autonomy a step further in the Slovak experience of history. It is perhaps the most controversial episode in Slovak history and the one open to the most varied and conflicting interpretations.

Slovakia became a vassal state under Hitler's Germany following an agreement between the Third Reich and the Slovak People's Party in 1938 and a vote in the Slovak Provincial Assembly on March 14, 1939. The new state was headed by President Jozef Tiso, an extreme right-wing cleric, with Vojtech Tuka as his prime minister. Tuka appears to have been, by all accounts, the more hard-line of the two, and Kirschbaum attempts to paint Tiso as a moderate who recognized that "the way to ensure survival was to have a regime run by fascist parties or by political leaders not unaware of the interests of Berlin."¹⁹

Kirschbaum acknowledges the tragedy of the deportation of some 70,000 Jews to concentration camps, but lays the blame for anti-Semitic policies on Tuka, stating that "Tiso was personally opposed to such measures but as head of state his position was complex, reflecting political pressures, and he used his office to oppose them only when it was clear what the consequences of the German Final Solution were."²⁰ Joseph Mikus, who also has personal links to the wartime regime, is even more dismissive of this episode. He writes, "During the war, the Slovak Republic was, unfortunately, not entirely successful in protecting the human rights of some of its individuals or of some groups of its citizens; but this was the result of severe external pressures, of forces majeures rather than any intentional policy." Of Tiso he writes, "The acumen with which he spoke as President of Slovakia with Hitler and handled delicate questions of Slovak-German relations with German diplomats and generals puts him above the Western statesmen who had capitulated before 'the Fuehrer' in Munich."²¹ This view, for all that it seems rather remarkable, represents a continuing interpretation among a section of Slovak society today. The Slovak National Party, in the present coalition government of Vladimír Mečiar, backed the recent publication of a new history book for schools that gives a favorable view of Tiso's regime and Slovakia's wartime state. Nationalists have made other attempts, not all successful, to reinstate Tiso as a hero of the nation, such as renaming streets and erecting memorials.

Miroslav Kusý offers a different view from that of Mikus:

In the final analysis, the Slovak State played a rather negative role in the formation of the national consciousness of Slovaks. Due to its dual nature (both its national and vassal status) it was probably incapable of finding a place in the hearts of the whole nation, since the fulfillment of one function suppressed and excluded the fulfillment of the other . . . In many respects, the state therefore substituted any truly valuable "service to the nation" with a nationalistic demagoguery, and even this was restricted by its vassal status (part of which required, after all, the recognition of the inferiority of its own people to the Germans). The price for the Slovak alternative to a Protectorate was probably, even in the [Slovak] national consciousness, too high.²²

Added to these various interpretations of the independent state is further confusion over how to view the Slovak National Uprising of 1944. The advent of independence in 1939 had appeared to arouse little enthusiasm among the Slovak masses at the time. Kirschbaum cites a report by Peter Pares, the British consul-general to Slovakia at the time, who wrote,

The reception given to the declaration [of independence] on Tuesday [March 14] by the people of Bratislava was lukewarm indeed. There were no manifestations of joy and the townsfolk went about their normal business as if nothing had happened . . . A week after the declaration . . . the inhabitants of Bratislava are still unable to show great enthusiasm for the present state of affairs. The general impression is one of apathy or pessimism.²³

The French consul-general reported that while the university youth appeared to be regretting the advent of the new totalitarian regime, "the powerless and resigned rural mass [gave] itself up to its fate."²⁴

The contrast between this reaction to independence and the extent of popular involvement in the National Uprising is striking. Eugen Steiner captures the mood of the uprising, albeit in a somewhat exaggerated account. "It was a real 'people's movement.' Slovak partisans, soldiers, workers, peasants, and intellectuals, wherever they had the chance, went into action virtually without their new national leaders. The latter joined the people only after they had seen what was happening and realized they could not stop the course of events."²⁵

According to Steiner, although the formal fighting was limited to a couple of divisions of partisans, usually recruited from army deserters, they had the support of a majority of the Slovak population. (In reality, the uprising was limited almost entirely to Central Slovakia.) Despite the fact that the rebellion was put down by the Germans over the course of two months, Steiner identifies it as the Slovaks' finest hour:

Politically and morally, the Uprising showed that the Slovaks were prepared to bring the highest sacrifice in order to gain national freedom. It was a great moment in the troubled history of the nation. However much the Slovaks had been blamed for the events of 1848 when they turned against the Hungarian anti-Hapsburg revolution, or for 1938 when their leaders competed with their Czech counterparts for Hitler's favors, whatever Czech democrats and liberals have thought of them, there can be no doubt that the Slovaks had shown their real mettle.²⁶

This is a far cry from Kirschbaum's assessment of the uprising. He notes that the leaders of the uprising wished to reconstitute the Czecho-Slovak state on federal lines, and concludes that "since these groups were dedicated to the destruction of the Slovak Republic and they enjoyed Allied support, their activities had a direct bearing on the future of the Slovak people. In linking up with these groups, the Slovaks in opposition to Bratislava were mortgaging the life of the nation."²⁷

Kirschbaum seems to merge the terms "nation" and "state" in this observation. Walker Connor has noted the disservice done to the study of nationalism by such confusions. "This tendency is perplexing because at one level of consciousness most scholars are clearly well aware of the vital distinctions between the two concepts."²⁸ In his accounts leading up to the formation of the Slovak wartime state, Kirschbaum does indeed observe the crucial distinction between the Slovak nation and a Slovak state. It is significant that once such a state is formed — in his view as an overwhelmingly positive phenomenon — the distinction blurs.

Miroslav Kusý offers the most valuable insight into the complicated ramifications of the wartime experience for the Slovak psyche: what he terms the "collision between the Slovak State and the Slovak National Uprising." He argues that, by default, the Slovak National Uprising was "not just an uprising against Tiso's regime, against his vassal ties to the German Reich, but [was] also an uprising against the national sovereignty itself

of the Slovak people, against the idea of Slovak statehood as realized in the independent Slovak State.” He notes the trap of confusing the notion of Slovak statehood with the particular form it took under Tiso. Since the “idea of Slovak national statehood and the regime of the Slovak State are not one and the same, and one does not represent the other, each enters into the historical national consciousness [of Slovaks] with a different, opposing evaluation.”²⁹

Kusý seeks to resolve this internal contradiction by reassessing the labels attached to the events. He suggests that the National Uprising is wrongly termed as such. It was an uprising by one part of the nation (in Central Slovakia) against its government, at a time when there were no German troops in Slovakia beyond a small number involved in transportation. The uprising was driven by resentment of the dictatorial regime of Tiso, and was thus, at best, a kind of democratic revolution or social uprising. (Indeed, as Kirschbaum remarks, the thousands involved in the uprising were driven by varying motivations ranging from political conviction, anti-German feeling, and opportunism to fear.) “In short: the Slovak State was indeed national, but it wasn’t democratic; the Slovak National Uprising was indeed democratic, but it wasn’t national.”³⁰ Although Kusý avoids the error of confusing the Slovak nation with the Slovak state, he nevertheless concludes — more in line with Kirschbaum than with his own previous statements — that the Czechoslovak federalist aims of the uprising’s leaders made it an uprising against the *concept* of Slovak statehood as much as against Tiso’s regime. The partisans rebelled “not only against an undemocratic period and fascist manifestation in this Slovak State, but also against its very status as national.”³¹

The significance of the views of these two commentators, who have very different perspectives and political backgrounds, is in the wide variation in the interpretations they offer of the wartime experience. These conflicting viewpoints, which both find their constituencies, have in turn engendered severe problems for the Slovaks’ view of themselves as a nation, as an independent state, and as the specific state that formed under Tiso. This lack of clarity continues today in the minds of many Slovaks and is used by politicians in the Mečiar government to suggest that anyone who criticizes the government is, by definition, criticizing the motherland, independent Slovakia, and is therefore a bad Slovak. In this view, membership in the Slovak nation is equated both with membership in the Slovak state and, furthermore, with adherence to its present government.

1945: Paying the Price

Whether one adopts Mikus’s view that “90 per cent of the population loyally adhered to the idea of the Slovak State” during the war, or the view that the uprising of 1944 was the truest manifestation of national sentiment, the reality is that federation was ultimately imposed on the Slovaks in 1945, rather than chosen by them. Beneš had managed to persuade the Allies that his London-based government-in-exile represented both the Czech and Slovak nations. Indeed, the Slovak elite appeared split on this issue, some advocating continued independence, and others, particularly those behind the uprising, strongly in favor of federation. What is certain is that even those who favored federation wished for equality for the Slovak people within a joint state. They believed that they had secured at least this much through the Košice Program, agreed with Beneš and others in March of 1945.³²

Nevertheless, as with the interwar union between Czechs and Slovaks, their second union was dictated by the Western powers. The policy of the (Henry) Stimson Doctrine,

which advocated nonrecognition of states that had emerged from external aggression or a violation of international law, left Slovakia with a weak case for continued independence. Furthermore, since the inclination of the Allies was to reconstitute Czechoslovakia, as desired by Beneš et al., any recognition of the interim sovereignty of Slovakia would have made this very difficult. Given that the Slovak wartime government had not capitulated to the Allies, the new federal state would have looked too much like a Czech occupation of Slovakia.

The lack of any choice exercised by the Slovak nation in forming the new state in 1945, and the denial of their wish for a federal arrangement, meant that the Slovaks did not embrace the new state in the emotional way that the Czechs did. Nor did they feel responsible for its subsequent political direction. Over the course of the next three years, the Communist Party grew far more in popularity in the Czech lands than in Slovakia. Unlike in the Czech lands, the Communist and Socialist parties in Slovakia did not have majority support among the people. In the elections of May 1946, the Czechoslovak Communist Party won 40.17 percent of the vote in the Czech lands, the National Socialists were next with 23.6 percent, while the Czech Populist Party gained 20.24 percent and the Social Democrats just 15.58 percent. In Slovakia, by contrast, the Democratic Party obtained 62 percent and the Slovak Communist Party just 30.37 percent.³³ Hence, when the Communist Party took over Czechoslovakia in 1948, politically-conscious Slovaks immediately perceived it as an affront to their national democratic rights. They saw the Communist revolution as a Czech phenomenon and, according to Kusý, felt less personal responsibility for the disillusionment and disappointment that came, with time, to Czechs and Slovaks alike.

1968: Federation or Democratization: The Old Dilemma

If the Slovaks blamed the Czechs for the start of Communist rule in 1948, the Czechs in turn blamed the Slovaks for the failure to attenuate its grip in 1968. Mikus's attempt to convey the Prague Spring as a period of Slovak leadership and Czech failure lacks credibility. For all that it was a Slovak, Alexander Dubček, who led the Prague government through the liberalization, he was one of the many Slovak leaders and intelligentsia who strongly supported the joint Czechoslovak state. Mikus asserts,

This effort of Dubček to bring closer to the masses might have continued had not the Czech intellectuals tried to outdo him in his liberalization policies. While the more realistic Slovak Communists were insisting on the federalization of the State, the Union of Czech Writers, encouraged by Dubček's initial success, envisioned . . . a complete democratization of public life.³⁴

The reality of 1968, as Kirschbaum points out, was that "the importance of federalization for the Slovaks did not mean that they ignored or opposed the democratization process. Slovakia indulged in all of its manifestations."³⁵ Steiner and Kusý capture the way in which the Slovaks' ambiguous historical experience of autonomy and democracy led to the choices their leaders made in 1968. Steiner states, "Most Czechs thought that federation was really all that the Slovaks cared about, which, of course, was not the case. It was only one of their demands, made more urgent by the fact that in the past they had so often been cheated of their rights."³⁶ In the final denouement of the Prague Spring, the Soviet tanks rolled into Prague as a result of alarm in Moscow at the extent of liberalization. This opened the era of normalization with the return of hard-line communism, but also brought to fruition the federalization demands of Slovakia. As Kusý observes:

The paradox and tragedy of August 1968 lie in the fact that federalization was brought to the Slovaks by Soviet tanks, that they got it as a “gift” at the expense of democratic socialism with a human face. History repeats itself for us very prettily: if events the first time round (in 1848) proceeded as a tragedy, the second time round (the “independent” Slovak State) they took on the form of a tragicomedy, and the third time round [the Prague Spring is] a pure farce.³⁷

The Czech interpretation of the events of 1968 is one of betrayal by the Slovaks, whom they saw as subordinating the aim of democratic liberalization to their nationalist goal of federalization. From a Slovak perspective it can look rather different. While liberalization was the sole issue at stake for the Czechs, national rights were an important goal for an increasing number of Slovaks. The relationship between these two aims, however, was confused. Under the First Republic, the Slovaks had democracy but little national autonomy and no equality; during the war years they had complete autonomy but had lost democracy; the uprising of 1944 was a call for democratic reform which, while it necessarily spelled the end of national independence did not extinguish the hope for some national autonomy; but this hope was again denied by the politicians in Prague after 1945. Democracy did not seem to have brought the Slovaks the political rights they sought, any more than had their experience of independence under Tiso’s puppet regime. So long as democracy and autonomy seemed to be mutually exclusive alternatives, the former was not an obvious priority in a comparison between the two.

Indeed, the achievement in 1969 of greater autonomy within the Czechoslovak state appeared to bear dividends for the Slovaks. The 1970s were a period of rapid industrialization and urbanization, with the Slovak economy rising to challenge that of the Czechs, although the extent to which its benefits were felt in Slovak pockets is questionable. The Slovak masses appeared content with these gains for the time being, or at least not prepared to fight for anything more. “Slovaks as a nation were at that time still intensely absorbed in themselves, and their cultural aspirations still focused on the development of ‘national culture,’ in which the main emphasis lies on the epithet and not on the noun.”³⁸ I return below to the question of Slovak acquiescence after 1969.

Kusý traces a similar trait of self-absorption through the 1980s, observable in a continuing lack of concern among the population for civic or democratic, as against national, rights. Little wonder then that the real unraveling of the Communist regime in 1989 took place in Prague with the participation of only a few Slovaks. The demonstrations and celebrations in Slovakia were genuine, but mostly led by students and intelligentsia and largely a reactive phenomenon.

Nationalism, Panslavism, or Provincialism?

I have referred in this review of the historical experience and memory of Slovaks to the distinction between movements limited to elites and those espoused by the masses. This is a crucial differentiation in considering whether a movement is truly national — of the nation — or whether it represents the nationalist feelings of a small and isolated group. Walker Connor praises Rupert Emerson’s definition of “nation” as “the largest community which, when the chips are down, effectively commands men’s loyalty, overriding the claims both of lesser communities within it and those which cut across it or potentially enfold it within a still greater society.”³⁹ To what extent was the mass of the Slovak nation caught up in these defining events in their history? When did any sense of collective national identity move beyond the realms of culture and language and reach

the level of political engagement? Were other group orientations dominant over the national one?

I have touched on these questions in reviewing the varying historical views of the role of Slovaks in the events of 1848, 1939, 1944, and 1968. Two group orientations appear to have been at play throughout these developments: panslavism of one degree or another among a large proportion of the elites, and particularly the intelligentsia, and provincialism, underlain by an attitude of resignation, among the mass of the population. In other words, Slovak leaders have tended to look to a unit of identification beyond that of the Slovak nation — most commonly, this century, to Czechoslovakia — while the Slovak masses have identified primarily with their local region or town — and at most with their social class — while showing limited interest in events in the wider Slovak territory.

The main political leaders of the Slovak rebellion in 1848 were individuals who had been involved in promoting a homogeneous Slovak language and literary culture. The key figure among them was Ľudovít Štúr, who is credited with codifying the Slovak language as it is today. In frustration at his abortive efforts to galvanize the Slovak people into action against the Hungarians, Štúr complained, “How many, even among our youth, have as yet woken up!! At most a small number, scattered and spread about here and there, who don’t even know to which nation they should attach themselves, whom they should prepare to serve.”⁴⁰ Peter Brock notes that, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, “the small nationalist intelligentsia succeeded in maintaining itself . . . only with great difficulty. It was unable to prevent the increasing denationalization of the younger generation . . . and it exercised scarcely any influence among the peasant masses.”⁴¹ In her 1963 short story, “Ľapakovci,” Božena Slančíková-Ľimrává uses her tale of the Ľapak family as a thinly veiled parody of the Slovak people. The family lives in a small village, with siblings and their wives all squeezed into one cottage. The family resists any move by Ľ’la, the wife of the oldest brother, to build a new house or change the status quo in any way. It is from this story that I draw the telling quotation at the opening of this article, portraying an ingrained laziness and resigned contentment among the family members. Later in the story, Ľ’la bemoans the fact that her husband does not even come after her when she leaves the house and takes up a living as the servant of the local landlords in an attempt to shake him out of his complacency. Ľimrává writes, “[Ľ’la] knows what the Ľapaks are like — that they have to be pressured into everything, that they are as unshifting as a lead weight.”⁴² Echoes of Štúr’s real-life frustrations in 1848 resound in these lines.

Kirschbaum looks to the historic experience of Slovaks under Hungarian rule for an explanation of these character traits and of traditional Slovak attitudes toward authority.

The Magyar social and political system had inculcated in the population an attitude of deference toward authority and respect for social rank. As a personal mechanism for the preservation of language and national identity, this attitude was not an unsuccessful way of handling external pressure; as a collective pattern of behavior, however, it bred passivity, resignation, suspicion, and almost always also opposition.

The opposition, such as it would manifest itself, was never characterized by mass violence. Tatiana Repková, a prominent Slovak journalist, emphasizes that these Slovak characteristics, particularly the habit of obedience to strong leadership, are still prevalent in Slovak society.⁴³

Transnationalism of the Elites

By the turn of the century, while the masses seemed not yet to have extended their horizons beyond their local environs, the intelligentsia were seeking support in the wider realm of Central and Eastern Europe among other Slavic peoples. As already noted, the leading Slovak individuals in the mid-nineteenth century, notably Jan Kollár and Pavel Šafárik, were among a number of literary figures who took up the political banner. Their panslavic and particularly their pro-Czech orientation was reflected in their literary and linguistic, as well as in their political, endeavors. Both Kollár and Šafárik wrote in Czech and did not support the formation of a separate Slovak written language, partially owing to the range of dialects from which one would have to select. Rather, they sought to develop a Czechoslovak language accessible to both peoples. Although it took slightly longer for Czechoslovakism to become an accepted *political* doctrine among the intelligentsia, its cultural, linguistic roots were already apparent.

As I have outlined, it was essentially a handful of Slovak intellectuals who collaborated in the formation of the First Republic and of the post-World War Two Czechoslovak Republic. Even the founding of the “independent” Slovak state under Tiso was the affair of a small political group which, despite their exclusively Slovak nationalist agenda, did not appear to enjoy much popular support. It was still Czechoslovakism, however, that predominated among the intelligentsia. Many of them moved to or frequently visited Prague and strongly advocated the notion of brotherhood between the two peoples. That is not to say that they were ignorant of or unconcerned by the economic and political subordination of Slovaks within the state. They strove ever more vocally for greater rights of autonomy and even for a federal structure, but never suggested that full independence should be a goal. The increasing stress that many laid on the rights of Slovaks within the joint state culminated in the demands for federalization as a priority over democratization during the Prague Spring of 1968. This is further echoed in the poor level of support among the Slovak intelligentsia for Charter 77, a document that called for democratic rights but paid little attention to Slovak national concerns.

Yet even these leading figures who became more focused on Slovak national concerns after the Second World War often seemed to fall into resignation and passivity. Kirschbaum declares,

There were no organized political groups, but there were people who were patiently waiting for change: “The men, and, of course, also the women, of the year 1968 were certainly not organized as a movement, nor even half organized as the chartists, but they knew one another. . . . In contrast to the chartist dissidents, these Slovak reformers concentrated on their own country . . . they were prepared for changes, awaited them, and tried to be ready for them.”⁴⁴

This approach of passive patience might not seem unreasonable given the nature of the regime under which the society was living. However, it stands out in contrast with the activism both of the Czech chartists and of the Polish Solidarity movement.

Dušan Kováč wrote in 1991, “Historically, the entire Czech nation was prepared to accept the theory of Czechoslovakism. The Slovak nation [on the other hand] rejected this theory even if there were Slovak Czechoslovaks.”⁴⁵ Kováč overlooks an important point. For all that the Slovak Czechoslovaks of the elite may not have mirrored a similar pro-Czech orientation among the masses, it is not at all clear that the popular sentiment was one of animosity toward the Czechs and the joint state. It is noteworthy that most of those individuals elevated to the rank of hero in the modern Slovak consciousness

were, in fact, the Czechoslovaks that Kováč disparages. Štúr, the father of the Slovak literary language, was a proponent of panslavism and author of *Das Slawenthum und die Welt (Slavdom and the World)* in 1853. Kollár and Šafárik, as noted, were also panslavic in their political views and favored the development of an integrated Czechoslovak language. Štefaník, whose memory so many tried to undermine in the Slovak national consciousness, remains a legend passed down the generations and a central part of Slovak history for his role in forming the First Republic. Hlinka and Hodža, two further national heroes, signed the Martin Declaration of 1918 supporting Czechoslovak federation (although Hlinka's views were soon to change). Finally, and most significantly, there is Dubček. As Steiner points out,

The roles of the successive First Secretaries of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, Dubček and Husák, in fact provide one of the many paradoxes of recent Czechoslovak political life. Both of them are Slovaks, but Dubček was always regarded more as a Communist than a Slovak. Husák, on the other hand, was always more of a Slovak than a Communist . . . Yet it was Dubček who came to appeal more to the national and political needs of Slovakia than the nationalist Husák.⁴⁶

It was Dubček who led the move toward political, democratic liberalization and Husák who pushed for federalization over, and ultimately at the expense of, democratization. Yet it is Dubček whose memory is venerated to this day.

Not only have the leading Slovak Czechoslovaks remained entrenched in the historical consciousness of the Slovak people, but many of them also became Czech heroes by dint of their dual role in forming the two joint republics. Hence these symbols of the Slovak national heritage do not clearly distinguish the Slovaks from the Czechs, but rather link them. The “imagined community” or “narrative of ‘identity’” which Benedict Anderson defines as the necessary foundation for a sense of brotherhood is not the exclusive property of the Slovaks, but joins them inextricably with the Czechs.⁴⁷

The one prominent Slovak figure who is exclusive to the Slovak experience before 1993 is Jozef Tiso. While Kirschbaum and Mikus defend his contribution to Slovak history and national development, the former acknowledges Liptak's observation that “Tiso was metamorphosed from the position of a real historical person into the function of a symbol.”⁴⁸ Regardless of Mikus's wishful interpretations, the fact is that this symbol remains at best ambiguous and at worst deeply negative in the minds of the majority of Slovak people. Forty years of Communist rule almost immediately following Tiso's fall, combined with worldwide condemnation of fascism, ensured that it was the uprising against the wartime regime that was, and is, more widely perceived as the great moment in Slovak history, not the achievement of independence under the aegis of that regime.

Provincialism of the Masses: Politics

While there have been increasingly wide-ranging views and aims among the growing cadre of Slovak politicians this century, it is fair to say that Czechoslovakism was the transnational goal that motivated many of the influential Slovak leaders, those glorified in the selective memory of the nation. However, as we have already seen, the horizons of the mass of the people were set at a somewhat different level from those of their leaders.

I have noted the lack of enthusiasm with which the independent Slovak state of 1939–1945 was received by the people. The Slovak uprising of 1944 gained far more popular support than the regime it rejected. Yet even this was almost entirely limited to

Central Slovakia and left large areas and some significant urban centers untouched. One is reminded again of Emerson's definition of the nation as "the largest community which, when the chips are down, effectively commands men's loyalty, overriding the claims both of lesser communities within it and those which cut across it or potentially enfold it within a still greater society."⁴⁹ Beyond the few for whom loyalty to the broader grouping of Czechoslovakia was the bottom line, the majority still seemed to find their loyalties limited to regions within Slovakia and to more local concerns than those of the nation.

The events of 1968 suggest for the first time a strong emphasis on national goals. The aims of Slovak leaders were divided: those in line with Dubček stressed liberalization and those in line with Husák demanded federalization as the priority. At the same time, a significant proportion of the Slovak people seems to have raised their attentions from local concerns to this nationalist agenda, actively falling in line with at least a proportion of the elite for the first time in Slovak history. Tatiana Repková recalls the unprecedented strength of feeling that reigned for a time among many members of her local community, reflecting both a wish for greater Slovak autonomy and broader political aims of liberalization. Yet this period of relative national unity appears in retrospect somewhat ephemeral.

The step of federalization opened the doors of government to many among the educated class who had taken up the protest against Pragocentrism. For them, the victory of 1969 was in winning access to jobs in the administration. As Donald Horowitz notes, "There is hardly an ethnically divided state without its 'civil service issue' . . . Differential visibility of various government bodies compounds perceptions of deprivation."⁵⁰ The events of 1968–1969 essentially satisfied that elite's sense of group entitlement, and they could furthermore reap the personal benefits that came with being part of a system characterized by corruption.

Horowitz's argument, however, that "derivative prestige" or "symbolic satisfaction" is felt by the whole ethnic group once its elite gains access to government, falls short of explaining the subsequent silence of the Slovak population. A proportion of the Slovak elite was indeed satisfied by the changes, dissolving the unity of voice they had briefly maintained with the Slovak people. Only those among the elite who had no interest in the reins of power were left frustrated. The mass of the Slovak people lost the political voice of its 1968 leadership, much of which now advocated the new status quo, and they simply returned in traditional manner to more provincial concerns. Repková explains this as a feeling of resignation among those who had battled for political freedoms and lost, and a subsequent return to passive obedience by those classes who had simply been carried along in the tide of their enthusiasm. Kusý goes further than this when he suggests that these events awakened a realization among Slovaks that the oppression they felt was not in fact national, but a facet of the political system.

Federation did indeed bring us the end of the "oppression" of the nation, in its narrow interpretation; yet federation . . . did not resolve anything so long as the bureaucratic machinations and the self-serving nature of the power elite, its privileges, its incompetency, etc., persisted . . . Federation, once it was digested by the nation, qualitatively changed the optics of the nation's sight: that which the nation had previously considered to be specifically national oppression it sees today as power-political oppression, because the latter now presents itself in its pure, unveiled form.⁵¹

Provincialism of the Masses: Territory

Kusý, as a Slovak who remained in Slovakia throughout this volatile period, reflects at length on the provincialism of the Slovak masses and challenges the notion that they form a cohesive nation. In an essay written in 1981, he cites a Slovak folk song extolling the unity of the Slovak people.

The populism of this kind of national consciousness has, I believe, never existed among us in the past, and still does not to this day. We are Ďetvanians, Magurians and Upper Hronians, Záhorians. But a "Slovak race"? Only some enthused, nation-oriented intellectual, a follower of Štúr, driven by an idea that is foreign to the mentality of the Ďetvanian, could think up such a thing.⁵²

As evidence of this provincialism, Kusý notes the Slovak habit of classifying a person by his or her regional origins. He explains that he would avoid telling people that he was born in Bratislava, as the capital was not considered a place from which you came, but rather a place you transited for various unavoidable reasons. Instead, he would offer the birthplaces of his parents as possible categories. He was ultimately dubbed a native of Bobrovča, his father's birthplace, and adopted by the Bobrovčan "Mafia" among his colleagues and contacts.

This desire for regional pigeon-holing continues today and is prevalent among all classes of Slovak society. It is illustrated in the remark by parliamentary deputy Borovský regarding the candidacy of deputy chairman of Parliament, Huska, for the position of president. He told a reporter from the newspaper *SME*, "I personally value Mr. Huska for his wisdom and life experience, and I also admire him because he comes from the same region as I."⁵³ In an article for *The Slovak Spectator*, Viliam Schichman extrapolates the feeling of regional differentiation and superiority that lingers behind these words. He remarks that there are two classes of Slovaks, primary Slovaks and secondary Slovaks. "Primaries can be characterized as those living or coming from Central Slovakia, whose language was selected as the standard one, who see themselves as the 'backbone' of the nation . . . Secondary Slovaks, on the other hand, live [in] or come mostly from the fringes of the country."⁵⁴ Schichman conveys how this distinction is carried out in the political sphere.

The ruling and mostly "primary" [government] coalition appears to believe that they are an integral part of the nation with the right and obligation to enforce their will on the "conquered" fringe areas and eliminate the influence of those they call "non-Slovaks" (which does not always only mean Slovakia's ethnic Hungarians, incidentally, but often also "secondary Slovaks") . . . In contrast, the opposition — dominated by "secondary Slovaks," together with other ethnic minorities and a relatively small following of "primary Slovaks" — is trying to realize a different vision of the country, one based on principles of citizenship which would provide for much more inter-ethnic tolerance. This is clearly dictated by their own origins, instincts and experiences.⁵⁵

The sentiments to which Schichman refers are evident in an article released by a pro-government organization, Committee 98, which launched itself recently on the Internet as a movement in favor of a Central Slovak republic. By way of explanation, they write,

The Government Coalition is exposed daily to pressure from the opposition, which beats relentlessly on the drums of hatred of all that is Slovak. The nests of these evil-doers are towns which were never real Slovak bastions. Jews, Hungarians,

Germans, and other national groups were dominant in Bratislava and Košice for centuries. It is not surprising that the great sons of our nation did not come from Bratislava or Košice. Our proud forefathers came from the small villages of Central Slovakia.⁵⁶

These words represent an extremist version of a common viewpoint, and clearly illustrate the continuing regionalism within Slovakia that undermines a collective sense of nation.

Provincialism of the Masses: Language

Kusý turns next to the question of the Slovak language as a key symbol of the alleged unifying heritage of the Slovak people. I have already touched on the movement among some nineteenth-century Slovak intellectuals who wished to cultivate a joint Czechoslovak language rather than create a unified, codified form of Slovak. It was ultimately L'udovít Štúr, a political leader of the 1848 rebellion, who codified the version of Slovak that is accepted today. Kirschbaum notes, "The codification of the Slovak language presented a challenge not so much in terms of the exercise itself . . . but in the choice of dialects from which a literary language would be created." He identifies two main "language integration areas": Central Slovak and Western Slovak.⁵⁷ This ignores altogether the East Slovak dialects, which remain hard to understand, even today, for many Western and Central Slovaks.

Kirschbaum and others vehemently reject the notion of Slovak as a dialect of Czech, and rightly so. What is significant, though, is that the literary form of Czech has taken far deeper root among the Czech people than has literary Slovak in Slovakia. Indeed, as far as comprehension is concerned, Czech has become almost a second common language for Slovaks as well. After seventy years of joint statehood, both Czechs and Slovaks understand each other's formal language without difficulty. This leads to the ironic fact that Czech is easier to understand for many Slovaks than any of the still highly varied dialects of their own people.

On the one hand, then, there is a certain Czechoslovakism of language apparent in Slovakia even today, since Czech can be understood and read by virtually the whole population. On the other hand, when one turns to the spoken language, regional dialects remain the dominant factor. Kusý writes:

Our provincial character still reveals itself fully in our language. Literary Slovak is still, after almost a century and a half, overwhelmingly foreign to our people. It is a foreign language for them, which they have to learn just as they would have to learn Esperanto . . . The vast majority of our people don't learn it in their entire lives, even despite the heroic efforts of teachers in schools, despite "correctly speaking" politicians, despite newspapers, radio, and television, despite cinema and theater. Not only do they not learn it, they don't want to learn it either, and I would guess that they aren't able to do so. I do want to, and I sincerely struggle to do so, yet, now in my fifties, I am surprised to find that I still have not fully mastered its secrets.⁵⁸

Tatiana Repková tells of the time she was first interviewed on television. The initial reaction she received from a number of viewers was how impressed they were with her Slovak. They were used to the fact that being a native speaker did not mean that one would speak a literary, correct form of the language.

In this respect, the Slovak situation is not dissimilar to that in Germany, where re-

gional dialects are varied and may even be hard for some Germans to understand, but High German can be used as a common medium even by those who do not speak it as a matter of course. The difference lies in the proportion of the population who can adjust to this literary language form and the degree to which the population as a whole supports it as a part of their common culture and heritage. Kusý comments on the fact that literary Slovak commands little respect among Slovaks and remains a formal method of communication. "Anyone who wants to be 'of the people,' or 'national,' switches into dialect. And since dialect can only be provincial in nature (we basically have no slang), he or she becomes a provincial Slovak." Kusý extrapolates this further. "In the final analysis," he writes, "the dominance of provincial language over common language is in and of itself an expression, a reflection, of the dominance of provincial history over common history and, indeed, also of provincial, regional culture over common culture."⁵⁹

Provincialism of the Masses: Culture

Kusý reports a discussion with the Slovak art historian Tomáš Straus in which Straus pointed out the historical nonsense of trying to insert the concept of Slovak art into Slovak history, at least before the 1920s. Folk art was localized and was not adopted as national until this century. Even to this day, the ceramics of Modra are known by the name of that town, where they continue to be exclusively produced. The mountainous nature of the Slovak landscape doubtless helped to keep craft trades localized and isolated until transport became easier and could link remote, rural communities.

There is no doubt that there exists a range of folk art that could be termed "Slovak." In some of its manifestations — embroidery, wood carving, and so forth — it differs little from that produced in the Czech republic or Poland. However, it is considered by the people as representative of their folk culture as a whole. Slovak dances and folk songs are also considered to be part of a national Slovak culture. Folk tales retain their regional origins — often centered around the country's many castles — but have become a national currency. What is still lacking to this day are the artists, musicians, and writers who could represent a Slovak high culture.

It stands out to a foreigner living in Slovakia that even on closer inspection there are no cultural figures of world standing who might project an image of Slovakia — or even an awareness of Slovakia — into the international arena. There is no equivalent of the Czech composers Smetana and Dvořák, no writer with the stature of Kundera and Havel. As the anthropologist Clifford Geertz points out, national identity is not just about self-perception, but also about a sense of worth gained through the perceptions of others. "One aim is to be noticed: it is a search for an identity, and a demand that the identity be publicly acknowledged as having import, a social assertion of the self as being 'somebody in the world.'"⁶⁰ Tatiana Repková notes her own experiences in searching for some Slovak souvenirs to give to friends in the United States that would convey an image of Slovakia. She found herself limited to artifacts that reflected only a peasant lifestyle, such as figures made from corn husks, or products that were of a generic type, often not even made in Slovakia. The only alternative was a compact disc, published overseas, of two Slovak opera singers. "The irony," she observes, "is that these artists are hardly acknowledged by the Slovak public as Slovak national artists."

In a world where the Slovaks have always been politically obscured behind or within the name of another state, they sorely lack the kind of recognizable representatives of high culture that could project their identity in the world and raise international

awareness of their existence as a nation. Ironically, the quiet and bloodless nature of Slovakia's split from the Czech lands in 1993, while highly desirable as a mode of secession, compounded this problem of obscurity in the international arena. If Slovakia is gaining a higher profile within Europe it is for the notoriety of the Mešiar government, not for any positive image of cultural achievement, nor for her undeniable economic successes.

Provincialism of the Masses: Religion

Catholicism is an important part of the life of the majority of Slovaks. It has perhaps been the most salient point of distinction between the Czechs and the Slovaks. While many Czechs adopted Protestantism via the medieval Hussite movement, adherence to a religious faith ceased to be a nationwide characteristic in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Mikus states disparagingly, "Humanism, divorced from the supernatural element, has become the national philosophy of the Czech bourgeoisie. The worship of liberty of thought and action, of the principle of spiritual and moral autonomy, of man as the highest criterion of life, represent the very quintessence of the philosophy of Masaryk and Beneš."⁶¹ Kusý is quick to note, in justification, that the Slovaks never experienced the religious ups and downs to which the Czechs were subjected by the Hussite revolutionary movement, the events of White Mountain, and the subsequent forced recatholicization, which he sees as the cause of the Czechs' "lukewarm" approach to religion.

For the Slovak leaders of the nineteenth century, religion did take on nationalist overtones. Those who advocated a Czechoslovak language and even political cooperation were largely Lutherans in the Czech tradition. When the Czech Hussite clergy went to Slovakia in the fourteenth century, they took with them Bibles translated into Czech. This written form of biblical Czech adopted, over time, some Slovakisms. A number of Lutherans in the eighteenth century strove to have this evolved biblical Czech formalized through study. Indeed, a chair of Czechoslovak language was created at Protestant schools in Bratislava and the mining center Banská Štiavnica.

It was shortly after the founding of the First Republic that Catholic Slovak leaders such as Hlinka began to speak of religious discrimination from Prague. Those Slovaks selected for government were overwhelmingly Lutherans. Kirschbaum writes that "of the fifty-four representatives that Slovakia was allotted [on the Revolutionary National Assembly in late 1918] . . . there were thirteen Czechs, thirty-one Slovak Lutherans, and ten Slovak Catholics," despite the fact that more than 75 percent of the population was Roman or Greek Catholic.⁶² It was Hlinka who later formed the Slovak People's Party from which Tiso's wartime regime emerged. The nationalist rhetoric of this party often referred to the Czechs as irreligious and tried to appeal to the Catholicism of the Slovaks.

Despite these perceptions that Slovak Catholics were historically persecuted on religious grounds, Kusý marks the beginning of concerted religious discrimination in the postwar era, under communism. He concludes that it was far more widely practiced against Slovaks than Czechs "both because it was [the administration's] task to purge the ideology and the representatives of the Slovak State . . . and because religion was a dominant factor, and, as such, the most significant ideological opponent."⁶³ Kusý remarks that religious repression of the Slovaks as a nation was the one issue that was not alleviated with the federalization of the Czechoslovak state in 1969. Slovaks undertook annual pilgrimages to holy sites in Levoča and Šaštín throughout the 1980s in a show of

resistance to repression. And in 1988, 300,000 of the 500,000 signatures on a Czechoslovak petition calling for greater religious freedoms were Slovak.

Religion would appear, then, to be the aspect of Slovak life that has most consistently united the population over time. This is not to say, however, that Catholicism was seen by the nation as a group characteristic. While this is certainly true of the Poles, Repková remarks that the Slovaks saw the Poles as *too* religious and were struck by the central role that the church played in their everyday lives. Kirschbaum claims that the pilgrimages of the 1980s were in fact nationalist displays. "By their very nature of bringing people together of all ages and from all parts of Slovakia, these pilgrimages also became nationalist demonstrations."⁶⁴ For all that this may be an apparent truth to the outside observer, the question remains as to whether the people themselves saw their adherence to religion in a nationalist light. The evidence does not suggest that this was the case. Indeed, there seems to have been a clear separation in the people's minds between religion and the Slovak nation.

Repková notes that those in politics who spoke the rhetoric of nationalism were, by and large, not themselves religious, and when they tried to use religion for nationalist purposes, it was with little effect. Kirschbaum relates a story from 1989 of how the communist regime tried to link Catholicism and nationalism to the detriment of both through a television series called *The Cross in the Shackles of Power*. The aim of the program was to suggest that the Catholic church had been responsible for the evils of wartime Slovakia and also of the twenty years before that. This and similar attempts to link symbols in the national consciousness appear to have failed: the people refused to reject Catholicism as part and parcel of the condemned wartime state.

Efforts to use religion for political purposes continue today. When Pope John Paul II visited Slovakia in 1997, Prime Minister Mečiar decreed that the visit should not be used for political ends. But posters featuring row upon row of Mečiar's face alternating with that of the pope went up overnight around the country. Yet the espousal of religion by political figures has seemed on this and other occasions to carry little weight with the population. For all that religious sentiment has historically been stronger among Slovaks than Czechs, it does not seem to have been reduced in the minds of the population to a specifically national issue, as it was by the Poles to their north. In short, it was not, and is not, a defining characteristic in the nation's self-perception.

The Growth of Group Identity

A Negative Identity?

One should not ignore the fact that there was an undeniable increase in national consciousness during the life of the two Czechoslovak states. We have seen how the Slovak population and elites came closer together in their thinking and activism in the events of 1968 than ever before. Was this new sense of common cause the result of a united feeling among Slovaks of who they were or simply an awareness of who they were not? As I noted earlier, Walker Connor draws this distinction between an ethnic group and a nation according to whether a group's identity is a form of positive self-definition or of negative rejection of foreign identities. Connor explicitly remarks on the negative nature of Slovak national identity under the Hapsburg Empire. "The Slovaks, Croats, and Slovenes . . . were aware that they were neither German nor Magyar, long before they possessed positive opinions concerning their ethnic or national identity."⁶⁵

I would argue that in the case of the Slovaks, this negative identity persisted under the Czechoslovak state. Once disillusionment set in — for the elites through their lack of political rights and for the masses in the economic stagnation and poor standard of living — the sense of resentment of Czech, or Czechoslovak dominance fueled a feeling of Slovak identity in contrast to Czech identity. The ease with which so many among the elite were co-opted into the regime and its corrupt ways, ways that did not fulfill the professed religious or economic aims of the Slovak masses, suggests that their nationalist rhetoric had lacked positive, self-defining content and was motivated by more self-interested concerns. The speed with which the population as a whole returned to its quiet resignation and provincialism suggests that the binding effects of common resentment of the Czechs were a cohesive force only so long as that resentment was fanned by the politicians.

Judy Batt sums up this continuing negative identity of the Slovak people, which has been exacerbated by the inflammatory politics of the Mešiar government.

The picture which emerges of the Slovaks after the collapse of communism is . . . one of a nation longing to be recognised in its own right, whose identity had largely become defined in opposition to the stronger, culturally more sophisticated and self-confident Czechs and Hungarians, and which was correspondingly marked by an inferiority complex and hypersensitivity to any insinuation about its “backwardness.” But it was a nation with rather incoherent, only part-formed or deeply divided orientations to politics, statehood and the substantive historical content of its identity.⁶⁶

An Alternative Czechoslovak Identity

In the end, the proponents of Czechoslovakism comprise the group that seems to have had the most positive sense of self-definition. For all that the Czech and Slovak languages were never united, they are entirely mutually comprehensible, and the Slovak members of this cadre were those who, if anyone, truly claimed literary Slovak as their mother tongue. Their view of history was homogeneous and internally consistent: the victories of Czechoslovakism were relatively unambiguous; the Slovak wartime state was an aberration; and the Slovak National Uprising was a symbol of the desire for unification as well as a rejection of fascism. The heroes of Czechs and Slovaks were the same, mutual symbols of their common history. The Czechoslovak state was democratic in its first incarnation, and its people struggled for democracy twice in its second incarnation, finally triumphing in 1989. This was a story that one could pass on with pride to one's children and grandchildren.

Emil Komárik, a Slovak writer, summed up the power of this Czechoslovak group, or nation, in a December 1990 article.

I cannot escape the feeling that on the territory of the [Czecho-Slovak Federal Republic] there are three nations: Czech, Slovak, and federal. In the republic, the Czech and Slovak nations are more or less tolerated, but the creator, owner and ruler is the federal nation. In numbers, the federal nation is not very big, lives just about entirely in Prague but owns 70 percent of the state's property, has all the executive powers and has all the laws on its side. It is a nation with only one layer but it is a layer of rulers . . . If there is any sort of nationalism which is truly capable of breaking up the republic, it is federal nationalism.⁶⁷

1989–1993: Explaining the Dissolution

And so I turn to the final breakup of Czechoslovakia. Was Komárik's prediction true? When the federal republic finally split in 1993, was it because the unacceptable dominance of the federalists defeated their own cause? Or was this the final maturation of Slovak nationalism, the blooming of political, national consciousness? And why did the dissolution come about so peacefully? Did this stem from a political maturity; from an underlying sense of shared experience that made hostility unacceptable; from fear of the consequences of violence seen in the Yugoslav experience; or from something else entirely?

The revolutionary thinkers and leaders of 1848 had been the literati of their time. As Kirschbaum writes,

The “Štúrovci” had been writers, poets, and social workers as well as political leaders; their successors would be no less. This combination of culture and politics, the need to define and elevate the Slovak core as well as ensure its survival, meant that Slovak nationalism avoided the extreme manifestations that . . . became the by-product of its development elsewhere in Eastern Europe.⁶⁸

There is perhaps some truth in the observation that cultural figures may be less inclined to violent protest than politicians of a different background. What is also true is that there was but a handful of individuals among the Slovak population in 1848 who were prepared to translate the rhetoric of the leaders into action: the message did not strike a chord among the Slovak nation, or, at least, did not seem to them worth fighting for.

In 1989, the issue at stake was once again democracy and not nationalism. As in 1848, Slovak artists and writers were prominent among the political forces that emerged in Slovakia as communism crumbled. This time they were recognized as representative voices by the now greatly increased proportion of students, professionals, and others who filled the streets. As their nineteenth-century predecessors had been panslavists seeking democratic rights under the Hungarians, so they were mostly Czechoslovakists seeking democratic rights and freedom from Soviet-led rule.

The 1992–1993 case is different. The artists and literati were never a part of the push for independence from the Czechs; indeed many, if not most, opposed it. This, like the creation of the wartime state, was a matter decided between a few politicians. Granted, there was no vassal status to the new Slovakia that was created; but, equally, there was no plebiscite, no referendum, no voice for the people in the formation of this new state. It was handled by a political elite and engineered by the two prime ministers, Vaclav Klaus and Vladimír Mečiar. To an extent, Komárik might have been right in foreseeing that Czechoslovakism would break up the federation, since the core dispute between Mečiar and Klaus was the degree of autonomy to be granted to the Slovaks and the rejection of what the Slovak government and others perceived as a history of Prago-centrism. While the Czech government wanted to continue with a federation of the two nations, its Slovak counterpart now sought a confederal arrangement, including separate international representation.

However, throughout the negotiations, full independence remained the last option. “No one really knew how viable an option it was and whether it truly enjoyed popular support.”⁶⁹ In 1991, a public opinion poll in the newspaper *Smena* asked that respondents state their preference among five options: a unitary state, a federal state, a union of associated republics, confederation, and independence. Forty-two percent of Czechs

voted for a unitary state and 28 percent for a federal state. While only 11 percent of Slovaks voted for a unitary state, 34 percent voted for a federal state and 23 percent for a confederal state. Significantly, a mere 16 percent of Slovaks voted for independence.⁷⁰ Furthermore, it is widely acknowledged that had there been a referendum at the time of the separation of the two states, a majority of both Czechs and Slovaks would have voted against it.

The final split between the two states, agreed between the two premiers on August 26, 1992, and enacted on January 4, 1993, cannot objectively be considered to be the final fruition of Slovak nationalist aims. It represented the allegedly nationalist aims of a political group, of a government comprised of an ambitious premier at the head of the HZDS party and its coalition partner, the Slovak National Party. There was certainly some support among the people, but it was that of a minority and came mostly from the business community. Repková notes that the final decision for independence was driven by the issue of privatization. Once Slovak politicians and businessmen realized that they stood a much greater chance of getting hold of state assets within an independent Slovakia than in competition with Czechs within a joint state, their personal interests drove the process of secession. Once again, a major change in Slovakia's political status had been engineered by a few leaders who stood to gain personally, leaders who professed nationalist motivations yet neither sought, nor paid heed to, the views and will of the nation.

As so often before, the nation accepted the new system as a *fait accompli*. A few were pleased, most of those who weren't adapted to it in resignation, and the remainder immigrated to the Czech republic, Austria, or farther afield. Arguments about the excessive Pragocentrism of the previous federal system were of little significance to most Slovaks for whom even Bratislava remains a distant and alien culture. The latest government of Vladimír Mečiar, which has been in power since November 1994, has centralized the Slovak administration in the hands of the government to an extent considerably beyond that of the years 1990–1993. Once again, the only concerted voices of protest, apart from the opposition parties, have been the artists, writers, and leaders of the new nongovernmental organizations. They are the only ones to have publicly demonstrated against erosions of democracy.

Tatiana Repková believes that nothing has changed in the Slovak mentality. "The Slovaks remain, at root, a peasant people," she says. "They are concerned with their everyday lives in their regions, and little more. They are, by nature, an obedient people who remain most content under the guidance of a strong leader." She puts her own very different attitudes down to her childhood. Her mother worked for the Bata shoe company, which was renowned for its capitalist methods and focus on human resource development. She grew up with this Western culture of self-awareness and self-reliance, which deeply influenced her and left her frustrated by the characteristic resignation and passivity she observed around her. Like others in her position, she finally resolved that there was no other option but to leave Slovakia for the time being, a decision she did not take lightly.

Ted Gurr, in his assessment of the factors that make ethnic violence a likely outcome of tensions between groups, stresses the roles of group identity and a common sense of grievance. "Grievances about differential treatment and the sense of group cultural identity provide the essential bases for mobilization and shape the kinds of claims made by the group's leaders. If people's grievances and group identity are both weak, there is little chance that they can be mobilized by any political entrepreneurs in response to

any external threat or opportunity.”⁷¹ There is no doubt that the Slovaks’ sense of group identity and common grievance increased over the life of the two Czechoslovak republics. Yet when the new federal arrangement of 1969, imposed from without, gave many of the nationalist voices a stake in government and left the rest of the nation with a continuation of the status quo ante, the Slovak nation once again became, in Kusý’s words, “self-absorbed.” If one accepts the argument that the uprising of 1944 cannot rightly be classified as a national movement, either in the geographical extent of the population involved or in the nature of the motivations at play, there appears to have been no instance in Slovak history when leaders have successfully galvanized group identity and grievances behind a common, national cause. There is no doubt that the leaders have been there. It is the strength and extent of national and nationalist sentiment that have been lacking.

Gurr also concludes from his study of ethnic groups that “the common denominator of almost all autonomy demands is the historical fact or belief that the group once governed its own affairs.”⁷² In order to make allowance for the Slovak experience, this statement should perhaps reflect a requirement that the collective memory of this independence be a positive, happy one. Slovak calls for greater autonomy, as espoused by the wider population in 1968, may have been promoted by the historical experience of statehood or may have been independent of it. What is significant is that this call for autonomy was not a call for independence in 1968 nor was it a call for independence in 1992. The Slovak collective memory of the wartime experience is a necessary part of any explanation of this fact, as is the continuing provincialism and passivism of the Slovak national character.

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It is clear that the smooth separation of the Czechs and Slovaks in 1992–1993 was not the result of clever political management of virulent nationalist sentiment but the repetition of a pattern in Slovak history: a political elite made a decision based on its nationalist agenda without reference to the people, and the majority of the nation was in turn ready to accept the formula presented to them and focus on their local concerns. The debate on separation within Slovakia, perhaps greater than ever before, was witness to the growth of politically conscious sectors in Slovak society. The irony is that these politically conscious groups — students, intelligentsia, professionals — were the most dubious about the prospect of independence, while support for the nationalist agenda of Mečiar’s HZDS and the National Party was thickest in the rural communities of Slovakia.

Strong leadership was once again the panacea that the worker and peasant communities desired, but this time they found it among their own number. On doing so, their response was once again passive obedience, even after Mečiar’s democratic credentials began to be called into question. As Pavol Šliač, a priest in Central Slovakia, wrote in an article for *The Slovak Spectator*, “Slovakia’s leader is a charismatic, talented man who is deeply sensitive to the profound but capricious moods of the masses, and who is able to satisfy their yearning for a father figure of divine stature.”⁷³

It is the nationalist rhetoric of Mečiar’s government that has continued to convince the outside world that Slovakia’s bid for independence can be equated with that of the Balkan and Baltic states. The new Slovakia has developed an image of rife nationalism and repression of its Hungarian minority. The reality is that this is the rhetoric of a few

leaders who have found a niche in certain sections of society for a negative definition of Slovak national identity. While Slovaks along the Hungarian and Czech borders live in relative harmony with their Hungarian and Czech neighbors, the politicians appeal to constituents far from these regions with their often xenophobic pronouncements of Slovak distinctiveness and superiority. The irony is that these views have gained prominence as a political platform largely *after* Slovak independence.

So I return to the path that Walker Connor traces from ethnic group to nation. If an ethnic group's sense of identity is defined more by a sense of solidarity when faced with a foreign element than by a common sense of self, then the nationalism of Mečiar and his followers would indeed appear to be more akin to xenophobia. Yet even this "represents a step in the process of nation-formation, it testifies that a group of people must know ethnically what they *are not* before they know what they *are*."⁷⁴ Slovak nationalism may not form an easy model for other nations seeking independence, but neither is it a mere mirage.

The reality is that what could grow to be a benign nationalism in Slovakia, a positive, self-defined sense of common identity, is being built by those who largely reject the government's rhetoric, often criticize it, and are labeled bad Slovaks and traitors by that same regime. As Judy Batt notes, the parties in opposition to Mečiar are not "less interested than those of the Mečiar camp in promoting Slovak identity, but rather they are committed to finding a definition of Slovak identity that can be compatible with the ideal of modern European statehood, and can thus be realized in harmony with 'European norms,' rather than challenging them."⁷⁵ The tragedy for Slovakia will be if this, its second experience of independence, should turn out as tarnished as the first so that the Slovak nation misses this historic opportunity of proving that Slovakia can have full autonomy and true democracy at one and the same time and create a proud and unified legacy for future generations.

Epilogue

Slovakia held its second national elections since independence in September 1998. Mečiar's HZDS party won the largest proportion of the vote by a narrow margin, 27 percent, barely beating the Slovak Democratic Coalition vote of 26.33 percent. The key coalition partner of HZDS, the Slovak National Party, gained just 9.07 percent, and the Union of Slovak Workers (ZRS) fell well below the 5 percent minimum with just 1.2 percent.

The Party of the Democratic Left, which garnered 14.66 percent, soon confirmed its preelection pledge not to join a coalition with HZDS and SNS, making it impossible for Mečiar to form a government. Although he persisted in his efforts to forge a coalition up until the October deadline, all that the incumbents could achieve before leaving the seat of power was to introduce some last-minute controversial measures, such as dispatching various cronies as ambassadors to unfilled posts and privatizing parts of state-owned companies to undeclared individuals.

On October 29, the opposition parties — Slovak Democratic Coalition, Party of the Democratic Left, Slovak Hungarian Coalition, and Party of Civic Understanding — signed a coalition agreement. Together they hold 93 of the 150 seats in Parliament, a constitutional majority. Given the democratic credentials of these parties while in opposition, all would at first sight seem well. But a number of possible pitfalls lie on the route ahead.

Some of the parties and individuals that comprise the new government have less than perfect records themselves. There are many reports of cronyism in the privatization undertaken by the ill-fated "interim government" of March to September 1994, of which some of them were members. There has been much talk of reviewing and resubmitting some of the privatization undertaken by the Mečiar government, which will risk deep disruption in the economy and cause a rift between government and industry that the former can ill afford. *The Slovak Spectator* has already warned against a perceived tendency among some in the new government to give access to compliant journalists and to condemn those who report on them critically.

A further danger is that the coalition will crack under the strain of political differences. Even when in opposition, these parties seemed almost incapable of acting in concert on important and fundamental issues. When they were in complete agreement on the need to move to direct elections for the presidency, rather than the present parliamentary vote, they were so focused on a difference of opinion in the detail that they submitted two separate bills to Parliament and lost any chance of carrying the vote. Should such divisions again dominate policymaking, these parties will soon find themselves stymied as a government and increasingly discredited. This would make all the more likely a premature return to the polls, bringing with it a strong possibility of a swing of votes back to the strong, yet less democratic, leadership we have seen since 1994.

The challenge to the new government remains that which I identified in the body of this article: to prove that autonomy and democracy can be made to work in combination in Slovakia and can win the confidence of the population. Although prospects look rosier than when I wrote this piece, the jury is still out, and the final verdict should not be expected for some time. ❀

The views I expressed in this article should in no way be taken as the views of the British Foreign Office.

Notes

1. There were other significant minorities within Czechoslovakia, most notably the Hungarians, Germans, Romany, and Ruthenians. However, I will limit myself to an examination of the situation of the Slovaks, who were always seen by the Czechs, the indigenous majority, as constituting a more significant ethnic group within the state than the other nationalities.
2. Anthony D Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 7–13.
3. Mikus was Slovakia's chargé d'affaires to Madrid during its period of independence under Nazi tutelage in the Second World War. After the collapse of this state in 1945, he was imprisoned by the Communists, escaped to Paris in 1948, and later immigrated to the United States.
4. Joseph A Mikus, *Slovakia and the Slovaks* (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1977), 139.
5. *Ibid.*, 27.
6. Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 108. Kirschbaum was born in Slovakia but immigrated to Canada with his parents when he was just three months old. A professor of political science and coordinator of the International Studies Programme at York University, Toronto, he has written numerous books and articles on Slovak and East European politics. His father, Jozef Kirschbaum, a close ally of President Jozef Tiso, was

- involved in the fascist government that Tiso led during the war years. As secretary-general of the Slovak People's Party, the government party, Jozef Kirschbaum was forced to resign when the hard-line Vojtech Tuka became prime minister. Kirschbaum then served as Slovak chargé d'affaires in Bern. After the abortive Slovak uprising of 1944, he tried to establish contact with the Allies to explore the possibility of Slovakia's retaining independence after the end of the war. He was referred to Edvard Beneš's government-in-exile, which had already received official recognition as the representative administration of both Czechs and Slovaks.
7. Miroslav Kusý, *Eseje*, trans. Caroline Barker (Bratislava: Archa, 1991), 166. Miroslav Kusý, head of the ideological department of the Communist Party during the Prague Spring of 1968, was dismissed from this position when the Soviets ended this period of liberalization on the basis of democratic views that he had expressed in the Slovak media. He continues to live in Slovakia, working as a writer.
 8. Mikus, *Slovakia and the Slovaks*, 27.
 9. Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 102–103.
 10. Kusý, *Eseje*, 231.
 11. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 113.
 12. *Ibid.*, 119.
 13. Kusý, *Eseje*, 64.
 14. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 122.
 15. A. J. P. Taylor, cited in *ibid.*, 121.
 16. Kusý, *Eseje*, 66.
 17. *Ibid.*
 18. *Ibid.*, 67.
 19. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 186.
 20. *Ibid.*, 196.
 21. Mikus, *Slovakia and the Slovaks*, 44.
 22. Kusý, *Eseje*, 163. The "alternative of the Protectorate" is the path down which the Czech lands had been carried following Nazi occupation. The Czechs were subjected to a regime imposed by the German occupying force, in contrast with the *voluntary* cooperation of the Slovak puppet regime under Tiso.
 23. FO 471/39, Doc. C3973/19/18, March 20, 1939, cited in Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 190.
 24. MAE, 132, 13–15, cited in *ibid.*, 191.
 25. Eugen Steiner, *The Slovak Dilemma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 66.
 26. *Ibid.*, 75.
 27. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 208.
 28. Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, 92.
 29. Kusý, *Eseje*, 67–70.
 30. *Ibid.*, 70.
 31. *Ibid.*, 71.
 32. The Košice Program is the name given to the agreement negotiated between Czech and Slovak opposition leaders at the end of the Second World War regarding the new Czechoslovak governing arrangements. It was made public in Košice, East Slovakia, in 1945. The compromise, proposed by Slovak Communist Party leader Klement Gottwald, held that the Slovaks should give up their aim of a federal arrangement in return for recognition of the Slovak National Council, a legislative body established during the war by the Democratic and Communist parties, which aimed to hold power after the war until Slovakia's place in a new Czechoslovak republic was secured.
 33. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 229.
 34. Mikus, *Slovakia and the Slovaks*, 56.
 35. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 242.
 36. Steiner, *The Slovak Dilemma*, 176.
 37. Kusý, *Eseje*, 167.
 38. *Ibid.*, 169.
 39. Rupert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation: The Rise of Self-assertion of Asian and*

- African Peoples* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 95–96, cited in Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, 107.
40. Cited in Kusý, *Eseje*, 160.
 41. Cited in Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 145.
 42. Božena Slanciková-Timrává, "Tapakovci," *Tapakovci a Iné Poviedky*, trans. Caroline Barker (Bratislava: Mladé leta, 1963), 189.
 43. Tatiana Repková entered the field of journalism in 1987 and rose to be editor in chief of the economic paper *Trend* and subsequently editor in chief of the daily newspaper *Národná Obroda*. In 1997 she encountered severe problems with government interference in the newspaper's activities and ultimately resigned. Shortly afterward she left Slovakia to take up a fellowship award at Harvard University, where she is pursuing research interests. The comments accredited to her in this article are drawn from a series of interviews and correspondence conducted between February and April 1998.
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 54. Viliam Schichman, "Two Types of Slovaks Divide Country," *Slovak Spectator*, December 18, 1997–January 14, 1998. Schichman is the director of English Services, a teaching, translation, and interpreting company in Prešov, East Slovakia.
 55. *Ibid.*
 56. [http://internet.sk/sme-1/prevolanie.html], April 20, 1998, trans. Caroline Barker.
 57. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 91.
 58. Kusý, *Eseje*, 60.
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 60. Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States," in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, cited in Judy Batt, *The New Slovakia: National Identity, Political Integration and the Return to Europe* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1996), 1.
 61. Mikus, *Slovakia and the Slovaks*, 149.
 62. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 161.
 63. Kusý, *Eseje*, 171.
 64. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 248.
 65. Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, 103.
 66. Batt, *The New Slovakia*, 10.
 67. Emil Komárik, "Federalné Tahanice," *Slovenský Denník*, 180/1990, cited in Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*, 262–263.
 68. *Ibid.*, 139.
 69. *Ibid.*, 265.
 70. *Smena*, August 28, 1991, cited in *ibid.*, 268.
 71. Ted Gurr, *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1993), 124.
 72. *Ibid.*, 76.
 73. Pavol Zidek, "A Priest Analyzes Meciar, His Fellow Christians," *Slovak Spectator*, November 20–December 3, 1997.
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Africa



Kenya

Kenya's 1997 Elections

Making Sense of the Transition Process

Rok Ajulu

The transition process in Kenya appears to be getting nowhere. Six years after the opening of democratic space, politics, political institutions, and governance remain predominantly stuck in the authoritarian quagmire of the past. Lack of broader participation in decision-making processes and absence of consensus around important issues of governance appear to be the norm rather than the exception. Indeed, Kenya's democracy experiment appears to defy conventional democratization models and discourse. It refuses to comply with prescriptive models developed by various Western scholars as the so-called liberal democratic values stubbornly refuse to take root in the country. This article attempts to explain why this is the case in Kenya. It is part of a broader study that focuses on the political economy of democratization in Kenya. The central thrust of the argument here is that in order to understand the crisis of democratization in Kenya, there is a need to focus on the political economy of accumulation, particularly on how it has been mediated politically over the post-colonial period.

Polling for the Kenyan election of 1997, the second since the advent of the 1922 "democracy experiment," began on December 29, and the electoral process was finally completed throughout the country and a new government formed during the first week of January 1998, with fairly predictable results. President Daniel Arap Moi was returned to office with 40.4 percent of the vote. Though Moi was still very much a minority president, his performance was a marginal improvement over the 1992 election, when he scraped through with 36 percent. His party, the ruling Kenya African National Union (KANU), did not acquit itself well either. It managed to win only 107 of the 210 contested parliamentary seats. Even with the additional six of the twelve proportionately allocated nominated seats, the ruling party still lacked a comfortable working majority.

Faced with a hopelessly divided opposition at the beginning of 1997, President Moi and senior officials of the ruling party had banked on KANU's winning the elections convincingly. The entry into the political ring of the National Convention Council, the reform movement under the leadership of its executive, the National Convention Executive Committee, halfway through 1997, however, began to change the balance of forces. By July 1997 the reform movement had President Moi pinned against the wall, and KANU was subsequently forced to make concessions to render the elections possible. Following the KANU-initiated Inter-Party Parliamentary Group deal, in which minimal constitutional changes relaxed rules for the electoral process, elections finally took

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place, but not entirely in President Moi's favor. As a result, some argue, the president spent so much time and energy securing the presidency that there was no time to attend to the parliamentary seats. The result: a razor-thin majority in Parliament, a highly flawed process, and a pyrrhic victory for President Moi was achieved at a rather high price for the continued political stability of the country.

Background to the Election

Yet all this could have been predicted long before the elections. Ever since Moi was pressured into conceding political space and embracing political pluralism, he made it rather clear that democratization was not part of his broader agenda. He had accepted multipartyism, he told a BBC television interviewer in 1992, because of the pressure from Western powers.¹ In fact, the political processes since the opening of democratic space in 1991 have been about reversing rather than deepening the democratization experiment. The lack of broader participation in decision-making processes and absence of consensus around important issues of governance appear to be the most recognizable trademarks of President Moi's regime. It was always an exercise in political sophistry to imagine that the regime was interested in conducting an election which could result in its loss of control of state power. Indeed, such an exercise would be contrary to what can be called its class interest. It is not surprising, therefore, that developments in the runup to the 1997 elections bore striking similarity to the 1992 period, which had produced a similarly controversial result. Let us look at those events briefly.

At the beginning of 1997 the opposition parties remained as divided as they had been over the previous four years. Numerous attempts to unite the opposition had failed dismally. The elusive search for a single opposition candidate against the incumbent President Moi, a political exercise that had occupied the opposition over the entire period of the opening of the democratic space, had yet to produce any tangible result. At the time, therefore, Moi appeared to be cruising comfortably to a fifth and supposedly final term. By midyear, however, the entry of the reform movement, the amalgam of civil society groups under the leadership of the National Convention Executive Council (NCEC) into the political ring under the slogan No Reforms No Election began to change the balance of forces.

The NCEC's political mobilization, which started with the Limuru Convention on constitutional reforms, culminated across the country in a series of rallies demanding fundamental reforms before an election could take place. The turning point came on July 7, Saba Saba Day, the anniversary of a memorable uprising in the capital city seven years earlier, which had signaled the beginning of the multiparty campaign. The violent confrontation between the state security apparatuses — Moi's feared paramilitary force, the General Service Unit — and the opposition alliance left ten people, most of them students, dead and hundreds injured.² A week later, the security forces again stormed a peace prayer in Nairobi's main Anglican church, All Saints Cathedral, and left a prominent church leader and opposition activist, the Reverend Njoya, for dead.³ The original Saba Saba in 1990 had sparked an almost identical pattern when thousands of people gathered at Kamkunji in Nairobi for a pro-democracy rally.⁴

Hot on the heels of these events came the ethnic cleansing in Coast province. The violence that had started as an ordinary criminal raid into the local Likoni police station, in which several policemen were killed, the armory broken into, guns and ammu-

nition stolen, and the police station burnt down, soon assumed political dimensions. A few days later, the death toll had risen to twenty, the attack spread into Likoni and Kwale districts, and it was increasingly targeted at up-country people. Furthermore, it was beginning to emerge that these were no ordinary criminals, for the attackers targeted churches associated with displaced persons, predominantly up-country, that is, noncoastal individuals, mainly Kikuyu and Luo ethnic groups. The government proved either unable or unwilling to deal with the situation decisively. As the violence moved into its second week with a reported death toll close to fifty, and the government neither able to stem the tide of rumors nor contain the violence, parallels began to be drawn with the ethnic cleansing in the Rift Valley province in the runup to the 1992 multiparty elections.

Overnight the government lost the political initiative to a section of the opposition and its allies within the National Convention Assembly. According to a report by the Kenya Human Rights Commission, the government for a while considered postponing elections until such a time as it had recaptured the political initiative from the National Convention Assembly, which throughout July and August of that year was on the offensive.⁵ Against this background the Coast Violence came to be seen as a strategy unleashed by the state to achieve certain objectives. One of these was to create an environment that would have served as a convenient pretext for declaring a state of emergency.

The other, of course, had to do with undermining the demographic strength of the opposition parties in a number of constituencies in the Coast province in the runup to the election. The large populations of the Luo, Kikuyu, and Luhya have often been considered a crucial swing factor in the Coast electoral calculations. It is not surprising, therefore, that most observers of Kenyan politics saw in the Coast ethnic eruption a repeat of the 1991–1992 ethnic cleansing, which engulfed the whole of the Rift Valley province and sections of Nyanza and Western provinces. Clearly the Moi regime did not intend to level the playing field. But the international outcry that followed the violent scenes of confrontation in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi, captured live by international TV networks, ultimately forced President Moi to concede to opposition demands for constitutional reforms before the general elections.

This he did through setting up the Inter-Parties Parliamentary Group (IPPG), a KANU platform which had been designed to blunt the impact of the reform agenda of the opposition and its allies in the National Convention Council. The Convention's Executive Committee saw this as a means "to cool the fire raised by the NCEC action and by the demands of the country for electoral reform, and in the process to legitimise the Moi re-election machine,"⁶ a feat that President Moi achieved with remarkable success.

On the surface, the IPPG achieved a remarkable breakthrough: the Constitution was amended by the National Assembly in October and November 1997 so as to render the country a *de jure* multiparty democracy; the Public Order Act (Cap 56) was amended to facilitate freedom of assembly; section 33 of the Constitution was amended so that nominated members of Parliament (MPs) are proposed on a pro rata basis by all parliamentary parties with a minimum of seven MPs. More important, the electoral process was supposedly delinked from the state apparatuses:

- The Electoral Commission (EC) was mandated to manage the campaign process without interference by the provincial administration.
- The EC was to have powers to hire prosecutors to expedite the process of election petition.

- The EC was to have powers to monitor fair coverage by Kenya Broadcasting Corporation radio and television.

The IPPG thus made it possible for President Moi to kill two birds with one stone, so to say. On the one hand, he was able to recapture the political initiative from NCEC and seemingly legitimate his reelection machine. On the other, he was able to satisfy the demands of the international donor community, which had insisted on there being some basic reforms (largely undefined), particularly after the NCEC had taken to the streets and threatened ungovernability and political instability.

In practice, however, President Moi made sure that the reform package remained less impressive in practice than on paper. As the commission chairperson admitted two weeks before the election, the law did not give the commission power to ensure that the election was free and fair. He conceded that there was little the commission could do about unfair coverage of the opposition parties by the state-owned Kenya Broadcasting Corporation.⁷

It is therefore not surprising that the provincial administration continued as if the amendments had not been passed at all. In the Rift Valley province, President Moi's stronghold, the Keiyo district commissioner is reported to have urged the local community to vote KANU in the following words:

As [I am] an employee of Kanu government, my livelihood depends on the very same system. Therefore I would not shy away from praying that President Moi be re-elected once more, to enable me to remain the DC. . . . Better the devil you are used to than the angel you do not know. It is scary to hear of these parties who usually claim that once they take over power from Kanu, they would dismantle the provincial administration and clip off powers of the police. Who will entertain that?⁸

Most of the officials in provincial administration would have been of the same opinion. The determination to retain their jobs under the "devil you are used to" certainly ranked much higher than any hypothetical ideas of commitment to democracy and fair play. Thus, confronted with a powerless Electoral Commission, the actual process of managing the election remained in their hands.

And so, just as in 1992 when President Moi did just enough to legitimate the electoral process, the outcome was never in serious doubt. The idea that the elections were unlikely to be free and fair was one that was widely accepted in the runup to the election. It would seem that not much had changed during the previous five years. Indeed, the democracy experiment in Kenya demonstrates that it is possible to have multiparty elections every five years without changing anything.

The Election Results

Largely owing to a divided opposition, the incumbent president was returned to office on a minority vote and the ruling party gained a slim majority in the newly elected Parliament. As in the 1992 election, ethnic mobilization emerged as a central feature of the democratization experiment in Kenya. The electoral process was flawed and highly controversial; more significantly, the outcome was divisive and highly prone to the influence of ethnic separatism.

To understand this necessitates a brief analysis of the 1997 elections results. For purposes of this examination, the main political players have been selected according to the following criteria: political parties that have more than ten members in Parliament and whose presidential candidates were seen or perceived to be serious contenders for the presidency (see Table 1).

Table 1

**The 1997 Kenya Elections:
Distribution of Seats by Province**

	KANU	DP	NDPK	F(K)	SDP
Nairobi	1	5	1	0	1
Coast	18	2	0	0	0
North-Eastern	9	0	0	0	0
Eastern	14	8	0	1	10
Central	0	17	1	0	5
Rift Valley	39	7	0	3	0
Western	15	0	0	9	0
Nyanza	8	0	9	4	0
Total	104	39	21	17	16

Source: Compiled from Electoral Commission of Kenya, *Parliamentary Election Results*, January 1998.

Note: KANU: Kenya African National Union; DP: Democratic Party, NDPK: National Democratic Party of Kenya; F(K): Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD), Kenya; SDP: Social Democratic Party.

To situate the election results in perspective, one must understand the ethnic composition of Kenya's provinces. Kenya has more than forty ethnic groups ranging in number from a few hundred to several million. The three largest ethnic groups are Kikuyu (21 percent), Luhya (14 percent), and Luo (13.5 percent). They occupy three distinct provinces, Central, Nyanza, and Western, respectively. Three districts in Nyanza are occupied by the Bantu Kuria and Gusii (5 percent) who have ten seats between them. The Luhya of the Western province, however, do not constitute one homogeneous ethnic group. The Luhya is, in fact, a combination of sixteen different subethnic groups — Bukusu, Idakho, Isukha, Kabras, Khayo, Kisa, Marama, Maragoli, Marachi, Banyala, Banyore, Samia, Techoni, Tiriki, Tsotso, and Wanga. It is believed that this segmentation into rival subethnic groups explains why the Western province has never voted as a single bloc as do its Luo neighbors or the Kikuyu of Central province.

The Kamba (11 percent) occupy the Eastern province, which they share with the Meru Tharaka (5 percent). The Rift Valley province is occupied by the Kalenjin (11 percent), the Masai, Turkana, Samburu, Iteso (5 percent), and a large population of Kikuyu "immigrants," those who settled in the province as a result of colonial land dispossession at the beginning of the century and are often referred to as the Kikuyu diaspora. It is also important to point out that the Kalenjin do not comprise a single ethnic group but like the Luhya are a combination of several Nilotic subethnic groups — Kipsigis, Nandi, Pokot, Elgeyo, Marakwet, Keiyo, Tugen, Sabaot, Dorobo, and

Terik. Together they form what is generally known as the Kalenjin.⁹

The Coast province is occupied by a number of ethnic groups — Taveta, Pokomo, Swahili, Bajun, and Mjikenda — which together constitute about 6 percent of the total population. Mombasa, the provincial capital, is metropolitan with substantial representation from the big four — Kikuyu, Luhya, Luo, and Kamba. As a metropolitan capital, the Nairobi province is predominantly composed of ethnic groups with the highest instances of proletarianization. The balance, however, is skewed heavily in favor of the Kikuyu, which explains why they have traditionally dominated the parliamentary seats in Nairobi. In fact the Kikuyu almost seem to regard Nairobi as “theirs.”

Given the ethnic composition of the political parties, the patterns of ethnic support are very easy to identify. Just as in 1992, Table 1 shows, the ruling party Kenya African National Union victory represented an alliance of the minority ethnic groups — Coast, North-Eastern, Eastern, Rift Valley, Western provinces, and eight seats from the Kuria and Kisii of Nyanza. KANU was virtually locked out of Nairobi (one seat), Central (no seat), and Luo Nyanza (no seat). It is equally significant to observe that as in the 1992 elections, areas of minority ethnic groups had proportionately more constituencies in relation to their populations. Thus Nairobi province, with a registered voter population of around 680,000, had only eight parliamentary seats compared with North-Eastern's 142,000 for ten seats; Eastern province has thirty-two seats to Central's twenty-five for almost the same number of voting population.¹⁰ This clearly demonstrates the uneven nature of the playing field.

In the absence of Kenneth Matiba's FORD-Asili party, the Democratic Party's Mwai Kibaki emerged as the authentic Kikuyu candidate. Matiba had argued for a boycott of the elections unless fundamental reforms were put in place and refused to register in the voters roll, thereby disqualifying himself from standing and from voting in the elections. This led FORD-Asili to split in two, with Martin Shikuku, the secretary-general, retaining the original FORD-Asili name and Kimani wa Nyoike, a Matiba supporter, registering as FORD-People. Matiba denounced both factions, thereby denying them a reasonable chance of garnering electoral support.

Kibaki collected five of the eight seats in Nairobi, seventeen of the Kikuyu seats in Central province including five from the Kikuyu diaspora and eight from Eastern province, but, notably, only from the Meru and Embu sections of the Eastern province. Thus the old Kikuyu Meru Embu Alliance (GEMA) held on rather well. Following the split within the former official opposition, FORD-Kenya, Kijana Wamalwa's FORD-K, and Raila Odinga's National Development Party of Kenya (NDPK) were reduced to Bukusu and Luo parties, respectively. Raila was able to exclude KANU and other parties from the Luo Nyanza picking, winning all but two seats. The eight seats from the Kuria and Kisii districts of Nyanza went to KANU and FORD-K. Wamalwa, however, was unable to do the same in Western province and lost fifteen seats to KANU, but he did get two seats from the Luo heartland, that is, Ugenya and Gem in Siaya district, and two from South and West Mugirango in Kisii district.

Thus of Raila's (NDPK) twenty-one seats, nineteen came from Nyanza and one each from Nairobi and Central provinces. Wamalwa's FORD-K was represented in at least four provinces — Nyanza, Western, Rift Valley, and Eastern. The other new party, Charity Ngilu's and Professor Peter Anyang-Nyong'o's Social Democratic Party (SDP), was able to collect ten seats in Ukambani as was expected, but was a disappointment in Kiambu in the Central province where it had been expected to collect the Matiba vote. It nonetheless managed to get five seats from Kiambu and one from Nairobi, but, of

more significance, none from Nyanza, where the party leader, Professor Nyongo, managed only a third place in the Kisumu rural constituency.

These figures are more or less replicated in the presidential vote as shown in Table 2. Once again, KANU's President Moi had solid support in minority regions with more than 61 percent in the Coast province, 73 percent in the North-Eastern province, and 69 percent in the Rift Valley province. He also managed a comfortable 44.67 percent in the Western province and more than 35 percent in the Eastern province, easily meeting the 25 percent in five provinces requirement. Kibaki managed to get 25 percent or more in only three provinces; his best showing was in Central province among the Kikuyu, where he garnered more than 88 percent of the votes. The rest of the candidates were "one-province" candidates. Wamalwa garnered only 48 percent in his own backyard in Western Kenya; Charity Ngilu won 32.35 percent in her Eastern province, and Raila did slightly better at 56.55 percent in Nyanza — he certainly lacked the clout to better the popular appeal his late father, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, exerted when he won 75 percent of the vote in Nyanza in the 1992 elections. Both the 1992 and 1997 elections confirm the overwhelming centrality of ethnicity in political mobilization.

This voting pattern represents a trend that has been observable in Kenya throughout its thirty-six years of political independence, that is, ethnic mobilization for control of

Table 2

**The 1997 Kenya General Elections:
Presidential Vote by Province**

Province	Moi KANU	Kibaki D P	Raila NDPK	Kijan FORDK	Ngilu SDP
Nairobi	75,272 20.56%	160,124 44%	59,415 16.23%	24,971 6.82%	39,707 10.85%
Coast	229,084 61.05%	50,540 13.4%	22,794 6.07%	11,156 2.97%	37,600 10.02%
North- Eastern	46,121 73.08%	11,741 18.60%	210 0.33%	4418 7.00%	366 0.58%
Eastern	368,801 35.87%	296,262 28.81%	7,755 0.75%	7,009 0.68%	332,578 32.35%
Central	55,822 5.59%	885,382 88.73%	6,812 0.68%	3,067 0.31%	29,733 2.95%
Rift- Valley	140,109 69%	343,529 20.90%	36,022 2.19%	102,178 6.22%	11,345 0.69%
Western	314,669 44.67%	9,755 1.38%	13,558 1.91%	338,120 48.00%	3,429 0.49%
Nyanza	215,923 23.52%	138,194 15.05%	519,259 56.55%	14,623 1.59%	15,309 1.57%
Total	2,445,801	1,895,527	665,725	505,542	469,907

Source: *Weekly Review*, January 9, 1998.

Note: The other candidates were: Martin Shikuku (FORD-Asili), Katama Mkangi (Kenya National Congress), George Anyona (Kenya Social Congress), Kimani wa Nyoike (FORD-People), Koigi wa Wamwere (Kenya National Democratic Alliance), Muniya Waiyaki (United Patriotic Party of Kenya), Godfrey Mwireria (Green Africa Party), Wangari Mathai (Economic Independence Party), David Waweru Ng'ethe (Umma Patriotic Party).

state power. During the short-lived multiparty period from 1963 to the "Little General Election" of 1966, the personalities and the parties were different but the voting patterns were strikingly similar to the last two multiparty elections. It will be recalled that the then opposition party, Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU), in which President Moi and his present coalition were leading figures, drew its support mainly from the Coast and Rift Valley provinces and parts of Western province. The ruling Kenya African National Union (KANU) then headed by Jomo Kenyatta with the late Jaramogi Oginga Odinga as his deputy, drew its support from Central, Nyanza, Nairobi, and Eastern provinces and parts of Western province. In 1966, when Odinga walked out of the ruling party to found his short-lived Kenya People Union (KPU), the KPU failed to cultivate a presence outside Odinga's Luo base in Nyanza, and in the ensuing Little General Election, all except one of the KPU MPs came from Odinga's Luo stronghold in Nyanza.

The following discussion considers the implications that can be inferred from these events for democratization in Kenya.

Ethnicization of Political Contestation

The Kenyan experience represents a case of a "ruling class" determined to hold on to political power at all costs. The key question however is, What makes it behave in this particular manner? The argument has been presented elsewhere that in order to understand the roots of political crisis and obstacles to democratization in Kenya, we must focus attention on the character of the post-colonial state in Kenya, particularly its forms of accumulation over the past thirty years or so, and the character of the class forces which have traditionally controlled the state and, more important, how power has been mediated.¹¹

The premise is that politics is about the conscious processes of sorting out contestation over resources, cooperation, and negotiations in the use, production, and distribution of resources, and the inevitable disputes arising from calculations about winners and losers.¹² In Kenya these processes have historically been regulated by authoritarian means mediated through mobilized ethnicity. These ethnic identities were constructed under colonialism and bequeathed to the incoming independent state almost in their entirety. The post-colonial state, however, went a step further, for it ethnicized political contestation precisely because this was the only medium through which the new elite could best consolidate its political power.

Another form of colonial legacy that was reproduced in post-colonial Kenya is the centrality of the state in economic activity and particularly the role of the state as the driver of the process of accumulation, easily the largest single dispenser of patronage and resources. The colonial state was central in the sense that it was the only organized institution capable of guaranteeing the reproduction of the conditions of colonial accumulation. Precisely the same role was to be assumed by the post-colonial state. Hence control of the state or proximity to those who had access to state power became the main preoccupation of politics. Yes, politics is generally about control of (state) power. The point, however, is that in societies characterized by an uneven development of capitalist relations of production, ethnic inequalities of the type that characterize Kenya, and high instances of extra-economic coercion, are all political activity centers around gaining control of the state.

This has been the major defining characteristic of Kenyan politics over the entire period of its independence. And precisely because of the uneven development of

commodity relations, which in the context of Kenya means ethnic inequalities, the claims made upon the state have been in sharp conflict. Contestation over resources has increasingly assumed the form of ethnic competition, thus creating fertile ground for the reconstruction of ethnic identities and ethnicization of political contestation.

Thus it is not surprising that ethnicity increasingly became the most important medium of political mobilization. Successive regimes in Kenya constructed class power along ethnicized identities, and resources have been contested along similar lines. Bates makes the mistake of reducing the post-independence ethnic contestation solely to the distribution of land and, to some degree, misses the class character of ethnicized identities.¹³ The struggles between KANU, KADU, and later KANU and KPU, in the 1960s, the rivalries between the Luo and Kikuyu ethnic groups throughout the 1970s, and the intra-Kikuyu rivalry in the dying days of the Kenyatta regime all had one thing in common: ethnic and subethnic mobilization for control of the post-colonial state. The assumption that the state is the central player in economic development and distribution of resources underpinned this contestation for state power. This remained the case in the immediate post-independence decade, and it continues to underpin political practice even now, notwithstanding the seemingly almost universal triumph of “market fundamentalism” during the course of the past fifteen years.

So the main difference between the Kenyatta and the Moi regimes has been the greater degree and intensity of kleptocracy under the latter. It is important to emphasize this point because some literature has tended to paint a glowing picture of Kenyatta while demonizing Moi.¹⁴ But to fully understand the significance for democratization, it is important to situate Moi’s kleptocratic regime in context, namely, the international economic environment within which it emerged and of course the particular classlike elements that constitute the ruling coalition.

President Moi’s new alliance, particularly the coalition he cobbled together in the aftermath of the 1982 coup attempt, was a relatively weak economic class. Unlike the Kenyatta coalition, which had constituted the most prominent pre-colonial and colonial exponents of primitive accumulation, the Moi coalition initially comprised a comparatively impoverished alliance from areas of the country where capitalism had made the least penetration.¹⁵ Moi’s first task was to construct a capital base for his coalition. In the absence of fresh areas of accumulation, Moi’s embryonic accumulators were compelled to “loot” from the old accumulators or, as Ngunyi puts it, the capital base of the new coalition had to be constructed upon the dissolution of the already entrenched Kikuyu capital.¹⁶

Bates lists a number of forms of “primitive accumulation” that this alliance was involved in, but also points out that a sizable element was pure predation, a transfer of agricultural surpluses to favored regions, particularly the Rift Valley and sections of the Western province.¹⁷ Clearly, the capture of state power enabled President Moi to shift the distribution of patronage and resources away from the Kikuyu to “disadvantaged ethnic groups” previously marginalized by the Kenyatta coalition who bore real economic and political grievances against that coalition. This period constituted the populist phase of Moi’s regime.

Ultimately, patronage and resources came to be concentrated around President Moi’s own ethnic group, the Kalenjin in general and the Tugen in particular. This process coincided, as it were, with the consolidation of his coalition in the aftermath of the 1982 coup attempt. Furthermore, Moi like Kenyatta completely politicized the allocation of public and private investments: roads, educational infrastructure, and agricultural

investments were directed mainly toward Moi's own political constituency. The new power was self-consciously a Kalenjin power, and institutions previously dominated by the Kikuyu were Kalenjinized. Access to university education and to employment in state parastatals depended on whether one was recognized by the government as a member of the KANU tribe. This type of distribution of resources and the crude use of the state for primitive accumulation could only be predicated on authoritarian control. Not for nothing did Moi abandon the practice of ethno-regional balancing that had provided a veneer of political legitimation and stability for the Kenyatta regime.

More important, however, is that this system of primitive accumulation fostered a kleptocratic bourgeoisie whose existence and survival depended very much on its continued access to this type of authoritarian state. It is not surprising that when confronted in 1992 with prospects of an open political process and a situation in which state institutions might have to be subjected to greater public scrutiny and accountability, this class sought to defend its interests through mobilized ethnicity. In the runup to the 1992 elections, the country witnessed the most brutal ethnic conflict, which bore all the hallmarks of contemporary ethnic cleansing going on in other more highly publicized places, most notably parts of former Yugoslavia.

The story of the 1992 ethnic cleansing in the Rift Valley province has yet to be told in full. The available evidence, however, suggests that the killer bands, recruited mainly from the Kalenjin and Masai supporters of the ruling party, were encouraged by top officials of the ruling party and the government, with the explicit project of expelling so-called foreigners from the province.¹⁸ Once again, in the runup to the 1997 elections, similarly orchestrated violence occurred in the Coast province, parts of Nyanza, and the Rift Valley province. As indicated above, apart from undermining the demographic strength of the opposition parties in the areas affected, this kind of ethnic cleansing, of stoking further violence and political destabilization, is also designed to extract political concessions from the center by those who are unable to compete at the national level. It is indeed the first step toward warlordism, a strategy which in South Africa, for example, Buthlezi's Inkatha Freedom Party put to very good use in the runup to the country's first-ever democratic elections in 1994.

Obviously, in accumulation regimes of this type the dominant tendency in politics is bound to be an inclination toward authoritarian control. This was true of the colonial state, whose legacy of an emphasis on exerting control has been reproduced in the post-colonial era quite uncritically, but understandably so, from the point of view of the class forces that have dominated the state since independence. Some commentators have suggested that a major obstacle to democratization in Kenya now is not so much this class disposition but, instead, simply the tactical failure of the opposition parties to unite and field only one candidate. To the extent that this view appears to equate democratization with just the removal of President Moi from office, it is fundamentally flawed. The issue of identifying a single candidate to stand against Moi should be separated from the much wider issues of democratic principles, not mere personalities.

While a united opposition would certainly bring an end to the long period of Kenya African National Union misrule, whether it would engender democracy remains highly debatable. The question that needs to be addressed is why opposition unity remained illusory over the last seven years. The answer is that the opposition, just like the ruling party KANU, is constructed around ethnic identities and has contested political power on the basis of mobilized ethnicity. Thus it is unlikely to usher in a new and more principled discourse and praxis of politics.

It will be recalled that the Kenyan opposition at its reconstitution in 1992 represented a fragile alliance of two main tendencies. The first represented the old classes of capital and property, predominantly but not exclusively the Kikuyu bourgeoisie, organized into two antagonistic camps. One of them, the Matiba camp (FORD-Asili), represented the fraction which had occupied the second tier of the old Kenyatta coalition and regarded themselves as the true representatives of the Kikuyu rank and file. They had the support of the Kiambu and Muranga districts of the Central province of Kenya, the Kikuyu diaspora in Laikipia, Nakuru, and Molo districts of the Rift Valley province, and more important, in Nairobi and some of the major towns. Matiba's tactical alliance with Martin Shikuku (Luhya) in 1992 not only gave him a national image, but, more significantly, represented a potential alliance of the two of the largest ethnic groups, the Luhya and the Kikuyu. The Kibaki camp (Democratic Party), in contrast, represented the hegemonic fraction of the old Kenyatta coalition, the elite of the old Kiambu bourgeoisie and its Nyeri counterparts, which for all practical purposes must have appeared as the true representatives of the Kikuyu ethnic group. This group did not do so well in 1992, coming third with 1.03 million votes in the presidential race. But in 1997 and with Matiba out of the race, the Democratic Party emerged as the true Kikuyu party.

The other tendency of course was the old radical petite bourgeoisie of the mainstream Kenyan opposition of the late Jaramogi Oginga Odinga's FORD-Kenya. The latter comprised the old radical traditional opposition, the professional intellectual middle classes, the so-called Young Turks, and other forces that had been active in the struggle for democratization throughout the 1980s. But it was a coalition that was built very much around Odinga and the Luo as its power base, with the support of the Bukusu subsection of the Luhya, a fact reflected in Odinga's electoral support in the 1992 contest.

Following Odinga's death in 1994, the party leadership passed to Wamalwa Kijana. The long rivalry between Wamalwa and Odinga's son, Raila, ultimately culminated in FORD-Kenya disintegrating in three directions: Raila's NDPK, which reconstituted itself as the Luo party, Nyong'o's SDP, which was seen mainly as the platform for the presidential candidacy of Charity Ngilu, and finally, original FORD, which now sought predominantly to reconstitute its base among the Luhya.

At the core of all these considerations was control of state power. The two Kikuyu factions needed the state to recapture old areas of accumulation, and the Odinga faction needed to redress the imbalances of the previous period. These considerations obviously ruled out any possibilities of a temporary alliance between the main opposition parties. The same seemed to be the case during the 1997 election.

Thus by their own political practices over the last seven years, the opposition leaders have demonstrated that they are not much different from KANU, which indeed is the main stem from which all of them have emerged. The proliferation of political parties since 1992 has nothing to do with principles or ideological differences. Rather it is motivated by political greed and personal ambitions among a group that is capable of mobilizing ethnic constituencies who have genuine grievances against a central government for their own personal political goals. It follows that the assumption that a united opposition would offer a fundamentally different alternative political force and much brighter future for democratization in Kenya requires serious reconsideration.

The Role of the International Financial Institutions and the Donor Community

The use of Western aid to promote democratization has been one of the main features of democratic transition in sub-Saharan Africa. Indeed, it was the intervention of Western governments and donor agencies in November 1991 that finally persuaded President Moi to concede political space. A number of scholars have questioned the motives of the international financial institutions (IFIs) and donor community and the simultaneous application of seemingly contradictory structural adjustment programs and political conditionalities to promote democracy. For example, it has been argued that structural adjustment programs have a tendency to undermine sovereignty and create authoritarian regimes which are increasingly compelled to implement an antidemocratic set of socio-economic reforms. Barya, for instance, argues that the new political conditionalities have nothing to do with the Western countries' commitment to encouraging democracy; instead, he sees it as an attempt by the most powerful countries to create a new legitimacy for the grossly unequal distribution of power and resources in the international capitalist system in the post-Cold War order.¹⁹

The Kenyan experience would seem to confirm some of these doubts and skepticism. The stance taken by the IFIs and donor community with respect to the transition process in Kenya has been hypocritical, contained double standards, and quite blatantly impeded the chances of democratization. Indeed, following the 1997 Kenyan election we cannot now say with any certainty what the West and its agencies mean by democracy, good governance, and transparency. For the IFIs and bilateral donors quickly reestablished business-as-usual relations with the Moi regime after the 1992 election. That was notwithstanding the facts that the election was visibly flawed, that the newly elected government was largely unaccountable, that the human rights record had hardly improved, and all at a time when state-instigated ethnic cleansing had clearly been unleashed on Kikuyu residents in the Rift Valley province. Donor agencies and their respective governments appeared to exhibit more concern about the pace of macro-economic reform, economic liberalization, and accountability to the IFIs than democratic political progress. Throughout the past five years, the regime has been able to get away with all kinds of political abuses, including fresh outbursts of ethnic cleansing as long as it kept its macroeconomic reforms on track. The result is that the Kenyan economy is probably one of the most liberalized in sub-Saharan Africa, unfortunately with little corresponding political liberalization.

Of course, the donors did intervene in the runup to the general election in August 1997, once the political mobilization which started with the Limuru Convention had culminated in yet another Saba Saba and as the crowd once again briefly reentered the political ring. Radical opposition members and their allies in the National Convention Executive Council seemed capable of capturing the political initiative, threatening to make Kenya ungovernable and create political instability. And as happened once before, President Moi was pressured to concede reform; and just as on the previous occasion, the reforms were modest in practice but served to legitimate the electoral process in the eyes of the world. Only a few days after his electoral victory, Moi returned to a theme that has consistently struck a favorable chord with the donor community. Addressing businessmen at the Nairobi Stock Exchange, he said, "I want to assure Kenyans and investor [*sic*], both local and foreign, that the government places economic growth high on its agenda . . . the stability of macro-economic environment . . . would be assured as

a prerequisite for attracting, investment.”²⁰ A week later the London Club of foreign creditors agreed to reschedule the external debt arrears that had soared to U.S. \$560 million. That same week the International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission was in town and expressed optimism about the country’s future. The IMF director for Africa Department, Gadwall Gondwe, is quoted as having said that the fund was “keen on ensuring” that Kenya returns swiftly to economic stability. The country, he asserted, had broadly met the conditions on good governance and anticorruption.

Around the same time a European Union delegation in Nairobi issued a statement saying that the threat to suspend aid to Kenya was now lifted; it was quoted as saying, “The two sides had agreed on a new measure under which the funds would be disbursed . . . long-standing cooperation between the two sides would continue, notwithstanding the shortcomings of a general election which the EU described as a step further toward Kenya’s full democratization.”²¹ And the Japanese government offered to Moi’s government a grant of KShs 188 million to be spent on the health sector. The Japanese ambassador, Dr. Shinsuke Horiuchi, is reported to have said that “his government was happy to note Kenya’s commitment to addressing various governance issues such as greater transparency, better management of public expenditures, and combating corruption.”²² This in the aftermath of one of the most flawed electoral processes that the country has witnessed since it attained political independence thirty-six years ago.

So another controversial election, another round of ethnic cleansing. But as far as the donor community and the IFIs are concerned, it is business as usual. The transition process, they argue, constitutes a step in the right direction. In the light of this evidence Barya’s contention that the new political conditionalities have nothing to do with a commitment by Western countries to encouraging democracy is not so very far-fetched after all.

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The Kenyan experience raises several interesting and interrelated questions for the democratization process. The first of these concerns the enduring ethnic pluralism. A political process that can exclude up to 65 percent of the electorate from the political center stage does not bode well for either democracy or long-term political stability. Ultimately it can only survive by way of some form of authoritarianism, more so in the context of Kenya, where among the people who are excluded are substantial ethnic groups who perceive that they are so excluded precisely because of their ethnic identity. The danger of a debilitating ethnic war is one very possible outcome of this type of dispensation.

Second, it is an established view in much of the political science literature on post-colonial Africa that the “first-past-the-post” electoral system, inherited from Britain’s Westminster parliamentary model of independence, seems to be unsuited to political economies of the Kenyan type. In societies whose political power is hotly contested along lines of ethnic cleavages, an electoral system that allows the winner by a minority vote to take all is simply a recipe for disaster. The winning party is tempted to resort to undemocratic means to protect its gains and try to legitimate its political control. The Kenyan situation has not exploded yet, but recent developments certainly are pushing in that direction, unless of course a workable power-sharing formula can be found.

To this extent, therefore, it can be argued that one of the more positive outcomes of the last two electoral exercises is a clear message to opposition parties that no single

ethnic group can win on its own. KANU's victory has been possible precisely because of astute deployment of state patronage to cobble together a minority alliance that, rightly or wrongly, fears the perceived domination of the majority ethnic groups. The need for a more inclusive political system cannot be overemphasized. Perhaps the time has come for a more serious consideration to be given to the merits of democratic federalism. Unfortunately, in much of sub-Saharan Africa attempts to introduce constitutional reforms to accommodate ethnic diversity have not yet been particularly successful precisely because political autonomy has often been manipulated to pursue sectarian interests.

A third and equally important question relates to the overall character of the political system in Kenya today. After two multiparty elections, can we genuinely say that something fundamental has changed in Kenya? It could be argued that the Moi regime has very much succeeded in narrowing the political space which was pried open with the reforms of 1990. Political repression has not abated: yes, detention without trial has been brought to an end, but as a local lawyer and activist put it, political activism has increasingly been criminalized. In the meantime, the judicial system has remained under the tight control of the ruling elite, and any legal action against the government or its protected officials seems bound to fail. Meanwhile, corruption has reached unprecedented levels, and the police and other security apparatuses of the state have almost been transformed into the armed thugs of the ruling party. All of which is certainly a far cry from what the donor community appears to perceive as a transitional step toward Kenya's full democratization. ❀

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Monitoring Elections in El Salvador and Nicaragua

Jack Spence

I would like to thank Bing Chen for his efforts over many months to put this event together. He first invited me in early 1993. While I was in El Salvador last year, it seemed that Jimmy Carter might attend. By this fall Chen had managed to nail Fred's [Frederick Gamst's] and my shoes to the floor, and then pursued peripatetic Padraig [O'Malley] with a barrage of faxes over Southern Africa.

I observed the February 1990 elections in Nicaragua as a member of both the Latin American Studies Association observation team and that of Hemisphere Initiatives, a group with which I have worked. In El Salvador I headed the Hemisphere Initiatives team. I visited Nicaragua five times during the electoral period, and for El Salvador, for once my academic calendar coincided with Salvadoran history. A sabbatical in the last academic year allowed me to be there during the electoral period.

I should say by way of comparison with Fred Gamst's presentation about Ethiopia that Nicaragua and El Salvador are ethnically and linguistically homogeneous societies in which the conflicts that led to war were based on class divisions and ideology. The main exception to this general pattern would be the geographically isolated Atlantic coast region of Nicaragua, which is ethnically and linguistically complex and has about 10 percent of the country's population. In El Salvador the indigenous population that survived into this century was largely destroyed or driven underground in 1932 when the government and landowners slaughtered people they suspected of participating in a revolt against coffee plantation owners.

Background of Elections in Nicaragua and El Salvador

The chronology handed out summarizes events in those two countries with an emphasis on elections and international negotiations. To refresh your memories: in Nicaragua, the leftist Sandinistas overthrew a long-standing, U.S.-supported dictatorial family, the Somozas, in July 1979. By 1981, the Reagan administration was financing and organizing a war of counterrevolutionaries (contras) to do away with the Sandinistas.

In El Salvador in 1979, several leftist guerrilla groups that coalesced in 1980 into the Farabundo Martí Liberation Front (FMLN), and a broad array of militant grassroots groups threatened to overthrow a military government, which was replaced in October of 1979 by a reformist civilian military government. This government, however, was not willing or able to stop human rights abuses, which in fact rapidly escalated. Despite high levels of human rights abuses, including the assassination of the archbishop in

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March 1990, the Carter administration increased military aid in 1980. By April the country was in a civil war, the government pitted against the FMLN guerrillas. The first Reagan administration (1981–1984) then made quantum leaps in that aid and supported elections to legalize the government as well as to convince congressional critics that aid was going to a democracy. The FMLN and the civilian left boycotted the first several rounds of these elections.

Throughout the 1980s wars raged on in both countries. They created enormous social and physical destruction, considering that they employed aerial bombing to a relatively limited extent. Some 75,000, mostly civilians, were killed in El Salvador, a country the size of Massachusetts with a population somewhat smaller at 5 million. Fifty thousand were killed in Nicaragua in the 1980s, and in the 1978–1979 war that toppled Somoza, in which he employed numerous air attacks on urban centers, another 25,000 to 30,000 died. By way of contrast, the United States, with eighty times the population of Nicaragua, had fewer casualties in Vietnam than the number of those in either Nicaragua or El Salvador, and the United States was traumatized. It is impossible to find adults in either Nicaragua or El Salvador who have not lost friends or relatives, and in rural areas the losses were much greater. Economic losses were mammoth. One billion in capital, roughly one year's gross export earnings, left El Salvador in the early 1980s. In Nicaragua the economy declined some 24 percent in the late 1980s, and in 1988 the inflation rate was 30,000 percent, too high to measure accurately. The economy was in free fall and chaotic, far worse than the war-damaged Salvadoran economy.

The Peace Process Elections

In both countries, as illustrated in Table 1, their 1979 break with past authoritarian governments had been followed by elections and new constitutions, the 1984 election in Nicaragua and a series of elections in El Salvador. But these elections had not been accepted as legitimate by the armed opposition in each country, by several civilian politically conservative anti-Sandinista groups in Nicaragua, and until the 1989 election, by exiled civilian leftist groups in El Salvador.

The two elections in question, that of 1990 in Nicaragua and March 1994 in El Salvador, were part of a peace process in each country. In Nicaragua the war was not over and the contra army remained in the field, but conservative political groups, including conservatives who had previously been in the civilian leadership of the U.S.-supported contras, agreed to participate if the electoral processes were free and fair. They had refused to participate in the 1984 election.

In El Salvador, the war was over but the elections were a key part of the implementation phases of the peace process. They were the first in which the FMLN guerrillas would participate. In both countries, they were the first ever in which all political groups from left to right would be represented and in which there would be no military candidate. Were they not perceived as being free and fair elections, legitimating elections, the peace processes would have been gravely, perhaps mortally, wounded.

As part of the guarantee for these "peace process" elections, 1990 in Nicaragua and 1994 in El Salvador, there was extensive outside observation of the elections, particularly by the UN, and in Nicaragua by the Organization of American States (OAS) as well. While this now seems commonplace, at the time, Nicaragua, in 1990, had far and away the most thoroughly and extensively internationally observed election ever. Since then, election observation has been a growth business. Between the OAS and the UN

there were 900 election day observers in Nicaragua for some 4,000 polling places, plus another 1,500 invited and uninvited observers representing governments to small church groups. More important, several dozen UN and OAS observers, and a half dozen other small groups including the Latin American Studies Association, Hemisphere Initiatives, and the Carter Center, watched the entire electoral process from the negotiation of the ground rules to voter registration to the campaigns. For example, every campaign rally had international observers. It was really the first time that election observation was taken to mean something more extensive than the few days surrounding an election.

An essential difference between the two elections, however, was that while the parties considered the UN and other outside observers to be, in a sense, a guarantor for free and fair elections, or at least a mediator and relatively impartial witness, the U.S. position in Nicaragua in 1989 was that only the ongoing presence of the contra army would put sufficient pressure on the Sandinistas to have a free and fair election. That is, the Nicaraguan election not only was held during a war that seemed to be dwindling down, but the threat was that if the elections results were “wrong,” the United States and the contras would continue the war.

At issue, then, is the extent to which these two elections contributed to the peace process in their respective countries. To what extent did they contribute to a process of democratization? And to what extent did international observation contribute to these contributions?

Contributions to the Peace Process

It is clear that the elections contributed to both of these processes and were necessary, but not sufficient, elements to each process. Had the elections been a blatant fraud, both countries would have been very different. It is virtually certain that Nicaragua would have plunged back into a re-escalated war. It is harder to say that about El Salvador, which was twenty-six months into an implementation of a peace treaty at the time of the election, but it is far from inconceivable that at least portions of the FMLN would have restocked their military supplies.

I would also argue that although a necessary part of the peace process, the elections were, among other necessary parts, a relatively minor part, and in each case the results of the election, more than the fairness of the electoral process itself, may have enhanced the peace process. This is a negative, though hypothetical, judgment to make on the election’s contribution, as “who won” is not supposed to be an element in deciding whether it was free and fair.

Of more importance to the peace process are agreements about stopping fighting, laying down arms, and providing security guarantees, which usually also imply some economic promises, to those most closely involved in the fighting. This was not accomplished in Angola, for example, where the “peace process” elections proved to be but a brief interlude in a war even more destructive than those in Central America.

Of course, it had not been accomplished in Nicaragua either. But in that case the electoral candidate backed by the United States and by the contras, Violeta Chamorro and her thirteen-party UNO coalition, won, and the Sandinistas honored the results and insisted that there would be no purge of the country’s military, no replacement of it by the contras. Had the results been the other way, it is far from clear that the Bush administration, the contras, sectors of Chamorro’s coalition, to say nothing of Jesse Helms,

Table 1

Chronology of War and Elections in El Salvador and Nicaragua

Year	El Salvador	Nicaragua	U.S./International
1931, 1978	1932 slaughter of insurgents; military runs government for large landowners.	U.S. appointed military head; Somoza takes over, murders nationalist Sandino.	
1979	Coup; "liberal" military civilian junta takes power.	Sandinistas oust [son of] Somoza.	Carter distances United States from Somoza, Salvadoran military.
1980	Archbishop assassinated; civil war begins.	"Moderates" quit government.	Carter backs "new" Salvadoran govt; cool relations with Nicaragua. Reagan elected
1981	FMLN final offensive fails.	U.S. contra war begins.	"Covert" aid to contras, massive aid to Salvador through 1980s
1982	Constituent Assembly elections/FMLN boycotts		CIA actions in Nicaragua discovered; Congress protests.
1983	New constitution; in war, FMLN gains; U.S. military aid up; helicopters.	War escalates.	Latin peace process under way; over nonmilitary contra aid.
1984	Duarte elected; failed talks with FMLN.	Ortega and Constitutional Assembly elected; civilian rights boycott.	Reagan reelected; aid to Salvador no longer contended; peace process thwarted.
1985	Centrist Christian Democrats win assembly election.	Economic plunge begins; Soviet helicopters in war.	
1986	War grinds on.	War grinds on.	U.S. Congress votes \$100 million military aid to contras in June. Iran contragate scandal engulfs Reagan administration.
1987	War grinds on.	War grinds on.	Arias peace treaty
1988	ARENA wins assembly election.	Tentative peace moves	Bush elected.
1989	FMLN changes negotiation stance/ARENA's Cristiani elected/Tet offensive; Jesuits assassinated.	Election campaign conservatives participate in UNO coalition; UN and OAS observe but contra war goes on at lower level.	In Nicaragua Bush keeps the contras at war to guarantee free elections. In December U.S. invades Panama.
1990	Peace negotiations begin.	Chamorro and UNO elected in February; military headed by Humberto Ortega; contra war ends.	

Year	El Salvador	Nicaragua	U.S./International
1991	Peace negotiations conclude December 31.	Contra land takeovers; UNO splits.	
1992	Treaty signed; implementation crises; modest economic growth.	Land takeovers; more UNO splits; economic crisis	Clinton elected; Senator Helms offensive on Nicaragua.
1993	Election of century campaign begins; modest economic growth.	Mass protests, unemployment, land crises	
1994	ARENA wins presidency. Assembly and municipal elections/ FMLN finishes second.	Constitutional crisis over power of president/ Sandinista divisions	Helms, chairman of Foreign Relations Committee
1997	ARENA loses ground, FMLN gains in assembly and municipal elections.	Alemán defeats FSLN Ortega for president and wins control of assembly in tarnished elections.	Continued Helms pressure on U.S. "citizen" land claims in Nicaragua; declined U.S. presence in El Salvador

Under the Salvadoran 1983 Constitution, assembly and local elections are held every three years, presidential elections every five years; no successive terms for presidents. Under the Nicaraguan 1987 Constitution, all presidential, assembly, and municipal elections coincided every six years, with reelection permitted. In 1995, presidential terms were for five years with no successive terms, other terms four years. Both countries employ proportional representation for assembly elections.

would have accepted the results and brought the war to an end — though I must admit that Bush would have faced increasing difficulties in getting Congress to appropriate funds for the contras.

Had the FMLN won the election in El Salvador, it is not clear that the military, protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, or, according to interviews of major coffee growers conducted by sociologist Jeffrey Paige, powerful business sectors would have been prepared to accept the election. I would not say that war would have broken out in that event, but short of that, there would have been an increase in death squad activity, the military would have pressured the incoming government in numerous ways, and there would have been massive capital flight.

As it stands, the post-electoral period and post-peace treaty period in El Salvador has been tranquil (relative to Nicaragua, not relative to Massachusetts) because a detailed treaty, however filled with crisis points and watered-down implementation, made at least minimal provision for laying down arms and for providing for ex-combatants, with considerable U.S. and international aid to back it up. However, it is important to note here that during the election campaign and since the election, five prominent members of the FMLN have been gunned down. There have been no arrests. Though the government has been quick to assert that these people have been victims of El Salvador's intensive crime wave, no one in the government has been similarly gunned down.

In Nicaragua, and despite a very clean election and results the contras wanted, the country has been plagued for four years by numerous armed bands of contras making not only economic demands but high-level political demands (the minister of defense Humberto Ortega should be fired and so should the minister of the presidency, Chamorro's son-in-law Antonio Lacayo), demands which have been loudly echoed in Washington by Senator Helms — actually, it is not clear who is echoing whom.

Have Elections Contributed to Democratization?

Again yes, in the sense that blatant frauds would have done the reverse. But taking any definition of democracy even slightly more ample than simply requiring regularly scheduled elections with open campaigning and accurate vote counting, the elections were but one piece in a complex puzzle of democratization. In El Salvador, despite extensive international observation, nudging, and lobbying, the elections were not conducted very well.

In addition, in El Salvador, up until four months ago [August 1994] the entire Supreme Court was selected for five-year terms by the majority party in the assembly, and the Supreme Court in turn selected the lower court judges and controlled their budgets. That this system has recently been changed is not the result of the “elections of the century” but rather of the FMLN's insistence on judicial reform in the peace negotiations.

With several thousand instances of human rights abuses, the court and police systems have had two successful prosecutions in fifteen years involving military defendants, and one of those was overturned by an amnesty law passed literally hours after a UN-selected Truth Commission mandated under the accords had named names in notorious cases of human rights abuses. [That remains true in October 1998.]

In both countries, the military retains virtual administrative and budgetary autonomy from the legislature. The assembly can veto a budget bottom line, but can't, or won't, examine its components. That is changing in Nicaragua. In El Salvador it is politically inconceivable that there would be a civilian minister of defense. Though the peace process drastically reduced the size of the armies in each country, in El Salvador all the officer corps remain but with relatively few troops to command.

My point here is not to fault the elections and their results for not changing all of this. Democratization is a process, and it would not be fair to charge any election with the whole job. Rather it is to say that the electoral process has made only small contributions in other institutional areas and that the international spotlight shines brightest only on election day — after that the U.S. president, at least if happy with the results, can declare that X and Y countries have joined the democratic team.

Did the electoral process in its own terms contribute to democratization? First, it should be noted that whether these two elections would be part of the democratizing process was and remains a contested issue. The Sandinistas claim that the 1984 election was democratic; what was undemocratic was that the United States and the contras did not accept the results. The conservative governing party ARENA in El Salvador makes similar claims about the seven elections that preceded the 1994 election.

In terms of conduct, the Nicaraguan election gets much better grades than the El Salvador election. Though turnout was considerably higher in both countries than in previous elections, the voter registration and voting processes in El Salvador effectively excluded several tens of thousands of potential voters and did so with a heavy bias

against the poor, particularly those in former war zones. Voter registration was legally cumbersome, particularly for peasants without birth certificates, time-consuming, expensive, and geographically inconvenient for many. So was voting, and there was much confusion at polling places, resulting in some 25,000 to 80,000 who showed up with voting card in hand being unable to vote. At least 80,000 who attempted to register never received a card.

In a country in which pre-election surveys showed high levels of cynicism about the electoral process among a substantial minority of the population — more than one-third said that the elections would be fraudulent; fewer than a third said that they would be free and fair — the election, despite a higher turnout of voters who could vote, did not do much to allay cynicism.

In Nicaragua these processes were a model of efficiency and fairness under the administration of the Supreme Electoral Council, as they had been in 1984. The campaign, however, was one in which a foreign power was an open, if legal, contributor to one of the sides.

Did the Observers Make a Difference?

Yes. In Nicaragua, while there were many campaign complaints from both sides about harassment, complaints that shared the distinction of being most difficult to verify, the contenders in general agreed that the observers headed off crises and built some faith in opponents in the Electoral Commission, which they conceived of as being controlled by the Sandinistas. What aided this process was when the Democrat Jimmy Carter and the Republican Eliot Richardson, who was working with the UN, themselves gave good preliminary grades to the conduct of voter registration and the general conduct of the election campaign period. (Had the results come out the other way, the effects of the UN, and Richardson, and Carter giving the election a good grade would have placed some constraints on Bush's actions.)

In El Salvador, the outside observers, in the months before the election, clearly helped to improve a flawed process. For several months, for example, the UN observers were providing most of the rural transportation for electoral authorities during the registration process, an action that clearly exceeded the UN terms of reference. Many more people would have been excluded from voting.

There are, however, costs and limits. In El Salvador, I would estimate the costs of financing international observation on election day only (counting air fares, housing, food, and ground transportation) to amount to at least \$2 per vote cast. For those who make the minimum wage in El Salvador (and many make less), that amounts to half a day's wage. The entire election, counting campaign, administration, and observation costs, was far more expensive than that.

The UN style is to be as obvious as possible. It wants people to know that they are being observed. But in a poor country, the wealth such a style involves, plus the high salaries paid to UN observers, creates some resentment among poor and rich — the poor for obvious reasons, the rich because the UN observers drive up the cost of high-end housing. There is also an understandable nationalist sentiment: Who are these outsiders to grade us? In Nicaragua, after I was introduced at a social event as an election observer, a Nicaraguan brightly welcomed me and said he looked forward to seeing me in the United States the following year. When I asked why he would be visiting the United States, he said he hoped to come to observe election procedures in Chicago.

Finally, though the UN had a seasoned team of observers in the months preceding the election, its massive election day team — and this would be true for the OAS in Nicaragua as well — included many people who had little observing experience and no background in the country, although, unlike other election observation teams, a majority spoke Spanish. When troubles arose in El Salvador, they were less than clear about what they should do.

The Prospects

Progress has been made. The elections were procedurally excellent in Nicaragua and mediocre in El Salvador with its bias against the poor. Turnout was excellent in Nicaragua, only fair in El Salvador — but on a par with the United States. Reform of the Supreme Court has begun in El Salvador with consensus building in the assembly; in Nicaragua, after some years of division and stalemate, the assembly seems to have fashioned a working majority, ironically including Sandinistas, which is providing some stability. In Nicaragua, there is a tradition of grassroots participation between the elections.

Without international observation the next time, however, it is not clear to me how El Salvador will improve its electoral procedural behavior, though there is a chance that there will be reform in this area, at least legislated if not implemented.

The main concern for each country takes opposite directions. The UNO coalition of thirteen parties had one thing in common: dislike of the Sandinistas. It is now badly divided, if it can even be said to exist. The governing system has barely governed, and economic growth has been nonexistent. Unemployment is extremely high. In both countries crime, violent crime, is at shocking levels. Jesse Helms will likely cut off all aid to Nicaragua. In Nicaragua, despite the civic virtues of the election, I believe, after four years of no progress, there is deep cynicism among the electorate. The governing system is fragmented and just barely a system. A right-wing, authoritarian anti-Sandinista is the current front runner for the 1996 election. In short, were there an election tomorrow, I would predict a drastic reduction in turnout and an electoral result that would either be a one-person authoritarian president or a continuation of political fragmentation so extreme as to make the country barely governable.

In El Salvador we have the opposite of fragmentation. Quite apart from the ongoing presence of death squads, apparently now also tied to drug running, the rightist ARENA has just won, by a commanding margin at all levels, its second consecutive election. Though it got but 44 percent in the assembly election, it has a working majority and confronts an opposition divided into three or four parties, the larger ones of which, including the FMLN, are in the process of dividing. It won 68 percent of the presidential runoff vote, and with a winner-take-all system in municipal elections, it has undivided control of municipal councils in 80 percent of the municipalities despite winning 44 percent of the vote. It is also the party that 99 percent of the wealthy people in the country support, which outspent its opposition in the election campaign by extremely large margins. A one-party state may be on the horizon.

These futures, should they come to pass, are not entirely the product of the very destructive wars, but they are in no small part shaped by them. The wars have ended and elections have been held, but reconstruction, economic well-being for the majority, reconciliation, and a deep-seated democratization with incentives to participate at the grassroots remain distant goals. ❀

This speech was originally delivered at the Distinguished Lecture Series, University of Massachusetts Boston, December 12, 1994.

Reflections on Elections and Peace Four Years Later

When asked in October 1998 to draft a brief postscript to the foregoing speech on elections and peace, I was discomfited to note that I had concluded the December 1994 lecture with several forthright predictions that are now hard to ignore.

Since the lecture, both Nicaragua and El Salvador experienced another major election round, while Nicaragua also held two regional elections in its two theoretically autonomous, ethnically diverse Atlantic Coast regions. Presidential, National Assembly, and municipal elections, including direct mayoral elections for the first time, took place in Nicaragua in October 1996. El Salvador had National Assembly and municipal elections in March 1997, and presidential elections will be held in March 1999.

El Salvador

My predictions that El Salvador might be headed toward a one-party state have so far happily proved to be off the mark. The rightist ARENA party suffered a major decline in March 1997, going from 39 to 28 seats in the assembly and polling 35 percent fewer votes than it had in 1994. By contrast, the up-and-coming former guerrilla group, the Farabundo Martí Liberation Front (FMLN), despite a major party split in the year following the 1994 elections, improved its vote by 28.5 percent and almost tied ARENA with 27 seats. The balance of 29 seats was divided among seven other parties, still leaving ARENA with a working majority in spite of facing major difficulties for votes that require more than a 50 percent majority, for example, ratification of international agreements. More impressive, the FMLN moved from winning fourteen tiny municipalities of 262 in 1994 to fifty-three in 1997, including the capital city and five of the next six largest cities. A former rural guerrilla force, it demonstrated real urban vote-getting prowess.

ARENA's decline was owing to several publicized, though unproven, heavy contact internal fights, a president widely perceived as weak, and a sharp economic decline following several years of growth. Its vast resources for campaigns, however, make it the strong favorite for next year's presidential elections. Its control of government remains firm.

Nevertheless, El Salvador continued to suffer from mediocre electoral processes. Because a poorly administered system has rules that make voting and registering much more difficult for poor rural voters, it is biased in ARENA's favor. For example, ARENA has buried proposals that would permit people to vote in their own neighborhood rather than travel to distant locales. There are no controls or even records kept on campaign financing. Incumbents can abuse state power to a degree unimaginable in the United States, for instance, mounting government-paid-for television advertisements promoting a government agency that are actually thinly disguised campaign propaganda.

On the other hand, the more serious doubts about electoral democracy in El Salvador passed a sterner test in 1997. I felt that the right would not accept an FMLN victory in 1994, but did not have to worry about that theoretical possibility. The proof of the

honesty of a system is not demonstrated as much in an election in which those who run the system are likely, with a fair vote, to win easily, as in 1994. In March 1997 one might have predicted that ARENA, which clearly was not going to lose control of the state, would stoop to fraud as the results were going to be close, but there was little evidence that it did.

It can also be said that peace has held in El Salvador, and fair elections have made a contribution to it. But El Salvador at peace is more dangerous than when it was at war, with its homicide rate some forty times that of the United States, one year topping even Colombia in world rankings. This violence is no doubt related to the war — high levels of postwar unemployment, a male population broadly skilled in the use of weapons, rampant and untreated post-traumatic stress disorder.

Other aspects of the transition to peace and full participation democracy have not been impressive. Voting turnout was 17 percent lower than in 1994 and remains at mediocre levels, and between elections political participation in citizens groups is extremely low by U.S. standards. The judicial system, despite having the best Supreme Court ever, has been very slow to rid itself of corrupt and incompetent judges throughout the system. A brand-new police force, although certainly better than the old human rights abusers, has itself been accused of corruption, abuse of authority, and incompetence and has been engulfed by a volcanic increase in crime.

Nicaragua

I predicted an electorate, made cynical by a policy that since the end of the war had been subjected to a crisis over every major fundamental issue a national government might face, would not turn out to vote as it had, in very high numbers, in the previous two post-Somoza elections and that it would likely elect Arnaldo Alemán, a rightist populist with authoritarian tendencies, as president. They turned out in high numbers, but they elected Alemán.

On the other hand, I did not anticipate that the legislature would, before the 1997 election, pass a series of constitutional amendments and laws which would limit the strong presidential powers in Nicaragua, making it difficult for an authoritarian. The president's controls over making international agreements, appointing heads of the military and members of the Supreme Court, for example, are sharply limited by legislative strength and, in the case of the military, institutional authority.

I also did not anticipate that Nicaragua's best government institution, the Supreme Electoral Council, would be subjected to a series of legal changes, budgetary pressures, and mandated politicization that would make it considerably less effective and result in a 1997 election day process marked by irregularities and significant chaos. This was in sharp contrast to the model elections it administered under intense international scrutiny in 1984 and 1990. The changes required the Supreme Electoral Council to appoint as regional electoral authorities, rather than professional staff, people nominated by political parties, to train the appointees, and at the same time, to implement a new photo ID system, all with a reduced budget. It performed well, but a greatly expanded electorate, high turnout, and lack of experience and shenanigans resulted in long delays in vote counts, recounts, and missing ballots.

I also did not anticipate that the Sandinistas, the former left ruling party, would

undergo a split and, subsequent to the election, suffer a major political crisis when its leader, former Nicaraguan president and 1997 candidate Daniel Ortega, would be publicly accused of sexual abuse by his stepdaughter.

Eight years after the end of the war, armed groups are still making semipolitical demands despite all predictions that they would fade away once their favorite candidate, and friend, Alemán was elected. The economy remains in a mess with unemployment rates at staggering levels for the eighth consecutive year and little new investment despite Alemán's election. The court system, at some levels, remains politicized, and the two large parties have been agreeing to tinker with the electoral rules in their favor, not that of the small parties.

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Though the conditions in almost all areas save crime are better in El Salvador — and crime is pretty bad in Nicaragua — each country has had a measure of success in mounting legitimating elections with results recognized by the opposition, which contributed to an end to their wars. But each country retains significant remnants of its authoritarian and corrupt pre-1980 past, sometimes manifesting themselves in new institutional clothing. It must also be said, however, that the military institution in each has gone through major change. In Nicaragua, civilians across a wide political spectrum and the Chamorro government agreed to a military law professionalizing and regulating the military, including the manner of selecting its top command. Its numbers and budget are 20 percent of what they were in the 1980s, and there is no draft. The El Salvador military has a distinctly lower profile and even the FMLN points to the success of military reform, in contrast to the country's slowness of reform in civilian areas.

Neither country has overcome the damage and scars of the wars in which their societies were shredded and their economies damaged or, in the case of Nicaragua, devastated.

El Salvador's economy is in better shape because many more Salvadorans left for the United States during the war and send much more money home. That is, this economic benefit has come at the expense of ripping the fabric of the society. This country did a relatively good job of holding the Salvadoran economy together during the war and an even better job of tearing Nicaragua's apart.

The chief obstacle to promoting peace and transition to democracy in each country is that broad sectors of the population have little faith or stake in the government systems because the peace process and electoral democracy have done little of direct relevance to alleviate their poverty-stricken conditions. Solving that problem is far beyond the expertise of international electoral observers.

Addendum

The above reflections were written in October 1998. I write these lines on December 20, 1998. In November Central America was devastated by hurricane Mitch, with damage in Nicaragua and Honduras by far the heaviest. Relief workers estimated some 10,000 dead in the two countries and damage that would take, assuming very large

international help, more than a decade to repair. Every year there are headlines about hurricanes, but this was the worst of the century in the region. To call it a natural disaster, however, disguises the human, political element. Agricultural policy for centuries has favored a few owners of very large estates at the expense of the rural majority. Land shortages force people to live up the sides of mountains. Money shortages force them to use trees for cooking fuel. Deforestation follows, so heavy rains cause erosion. A major storm creates a mud slide, and mud slides can move much faster than a human, or a horse, can run. Whole villages were wiped out. It is not clear what this will mean politically for Nicaragua, but the Alemán government, suspecting Sandinista mayors were exaggerating the dangers as the rains poured down, minimized the danger and damage. When this blunder was clear, it attempted to control relief funds.

Nicaragua's last quarter century of suffering is of Old Testament proportions. In 1972 Managua suffered a massive earthquake with more than 20,000 killed. Somoza, the dictator, used aid funds to his own benefit. The 1978-1979 war against Somoza left tens of thousands dead and an economy so ruined that the United Nations declared that under "the best of circumstances," recovery from the war would not be complete until the end of the century. Rather than the best of circumstances, the Reagan administration financed a war against the Sandinistas that lasted ten years. Economic ruin far exceeded that of the prior war. Nature brought a major hurricane in 1988. Deforestation brought several years of drought. Then there was a tidal wave and volcanic eruptions. With the end of the millennium a year off, Mitch arrived. ❀

Election Monitoring in Oromia

What Are the Conditions for Democracy?

Frederick C. Gamst

Professor Gamst, a member of the Joint International Observer group (JIOG), reports the problems he monitored during the 1992 electoral campaign and voting activities in the strife-ridden region of Oromia in Ethiopia. His analyses illuminate the background institutional barriers and the politically competitive reasons for the failure of the elections. Gamst discusses the nature of the multitudinous Oromo people and the consequences of any election victory by them for the destiny of Ethiopia. He also describes the sometimes violent aftermaths of the failed election of 1992 and its follow-up election of 1994, in which the Oromo were again denied reasonable participation in government. He closes questioning of U.S. policy and its relation to the election failure.

The Emerging Conflicts of Ethnicity after the Pax Atomica

A political *pax atomica*, technologically engendered by the nuclear stalemate of mutually assured destruction between the two superpowers, existed during the Cold War. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the stalemate, a bloody time of unchecked local conflicts fueled by ideologies of ethnicity has emerged across the world. In the dawning glow of the new millennium, the world's paramount ethnological concerns loom: How inviolate are the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a polynational country, and what should be the limits of ethnic self-determination, including irredentism and secessionism?

These kinds of concerns find ever more incendiary expression, seem inextinguishable, and sometimes have a potential for flaring into a wider conflagration in places such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rwanda, Angola, Sudan, East Timor, Palestine, Kurdistan, Chechnya, Chiapas, Kosovo, and virtually unknown Oromia. The dawning glow of the millennium, then, is tinged with ethnic incandescences.

Today, ethnic wars and lesser combat total about 150 and grow in number. Modern weaponry and other advanced technology savagely exacerbate these conflicts. Such fighting kills and maims more civilians than soldiers, drives countless persons as refugees from their homes and livelihood, destroys property in impoverished lands, militarily expends scarce resources in have-not states, and depresses commerce in countries with inadequate levels of employment. I turn to the problem of Oromia for a particularizing illumination of the conflagrant conflicts now flickering and flaring on the horizon of the new millennium.

Frederick C. Gamst, professor of anthropology, University of Massachusetts Boston, specializes in the Horn of Africa.



Background and Nature of the 1992 Elections in Ethiopia

During June 1992, as a member of the Joint International Observer Group (JIOG), I helped monitor what was to become the failed, governmentally coerced election process in former Welega province, southwestern Ethiopia. (Before 1989, Ethiopia comprised fourteen provinces.) The plan for the elections had the blessing of the United States and other Western governments and was viewed as the way to bring peace to war-ravaged Ethiopia. In part, the failure of the countrywide regional elections was fostered by a lack of normative and institutional support for voting. In a strife-ridden country, this voting would have resulted in giving long-contested authority to partisan “winners” who could not readily surrender what they had, at long last, “justifiably” secured.¹ Ethiopia is a polynational state of more than eighty ethnic groups or specific whole cultures. Many ethnic groups have one or more usually armed political parties. I was assigned by the JIOG to the western part, former Welega, of the Oromo people’s war-torn region, now called Oromia. This region has roadside debris of destroyed T-54 tanks, armored personnel carriers, and army trucks, all supplied by the former USSR. The Oromo speak Afaan Oromo, an Eastern Cushitic language, and constitute some 45 percent of the Ethiopian population of perhaps 50 million, and might number 23 million in Ethiopia. One of the largest ethnic groups in Africa, the Oromo also live in Kenya and, formerly, in Somalia. A pan-Oromo ethnic identity is a recent, ever growing cultural awakening.

The Oromo problem has bedeviled Ethiopia, a modern empire, since its conquest creation toward the end of the nineteenth century.² Beginning in the 1500s, much of the history of the ancient kingdom of Abyssinia, located in the northern half of today’s Ethiopia and in Eritrea, included epoch struggles between the native authoritarian Amhara-Tigrayans, speaking Ethio-Semitic languages, and intrusive egalitarian Oromo groups.³ Since the 1960s, various Oromo organizations have been in armed insurrection against the sequential central governments of: the monarchy, with its king of kings Haile Selassie I; the revolutionary Marxist Derg, which destroyed the monarchy; and the present government of Ethiopia, resulting from crushing the Derg in 1991 after years of brutal civil war.

The Contesting Political Actors

Just before and after the 1992 elections in Ethiopia, the three principal bodies of contesting actors in western Oromia included, first, the recently militarily victorious Tigrayans from the far north of Ethiopia, with their national movement, the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). The Tigrayans organized their EPRDF to dominate their Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE), which preceded the present government of the country. Tigrayan control of the transitional government existed before and after the elections of 1992. Control is through their Marxist, formerly guerrilla Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front and their Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front.⁴

The second actor is the EPRDF’s locally unpopular Oromo client group, the Oromo People’s Democratic Organization, hereafter, called client-Oromo. Similar ethnic client groups exist for other Ethiopian peoples. The EPRDF wields power independently of its subordinated organizations: in addition to the irregular troops of its client fronts, the

EPRDF controls the military and local security forces of Ethiopia. In opposition to the EPRDF and its client-Oromo is the third actor, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). This front is broadly popular and is often politically unwise, divisive, and separatist. The Oromo Liberation Front was the largest non-EPRDF organization in the transitional government. In 1991, all three fronts, along with others, finally defeated the Derg, which controlled Ethiopia from 1976 through 1990.⁵ “Others” especially include the militarily powerful Eritrean People’s Liberation Front, militarily victorious in its thirty-plus years of bitter armed struggle in the north against the successive governments of Ethiopia.

The Eritreans, with their Liberation Front, represent a lesser fourth player in the region. In 1992, the Eritreans sent peacekeepers to the Oromo region to separate the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front and the OLF, which had been engaged in destructive battles. Both sides were then supposed to consign their armed forces to specially designated holding camps. The Soviet-supplied vehicles littering the Oromia countryside result in part from the struggle for this region between the Oromo Liberation Front and the EPRDF. The Eritreans, almost until election time, successfully separated the Tigrayan troops and their Oromo clients from the OLF and maintained the truce. Enmity between the Oromo Liberation Front and the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front is great, sometimes bloody, and appears to be enduring.

The currently-dominant EPRDF also has considerable opposition from the once long-dominant ethnic group of Ethiopia, the Amhara, and their independent political front, and from other ethnic fronts. These matters, however, are outside the scope of this presentation. Many Amhara are critical of the TGE’s partitioning of the country, following Leninist thinking, into ten ethnic administrative regions. These so-called self-governing territories, of which Oromia is one, create more problems of ethnic friction than they solve. With one or two exceptions of fronts not mentioned in this article, all the considerable number of fronts in opposition to the Communist Derg were also Marxist. Today, in conversations with representatives of some of these once unabashedly Marxist fronts it is denied that the groups either are now or ever were Marxist. But then, at this time of the “end of history,” few political groups want to use the label of passé fashion, *Marxist*, anymore.

The Political Contest

In sub-Saharan Africa, a voter usually elects according to his or her particular ethnic bloc. Thus, if any Ethiopian government dared to risk surrender of its power by holding a free and fair election — American style, as some Ethiopians label it — the Oromo would take almost half the vote. The Oromo, allied with some minor groups, would at long last control the government and the country. But such a control is what the Amhara and Tigrayans have always fought to prevent. (The Tigrayans suppressed their sibling Amhara in the civil war that ended in 1991.)

Paradoxically, as a consequence of the 1992 elections, the Tigrayans would be surrendering their authority, gained only through years of costly war involving tens of thousands of Tigrayan deaths, to one of their battlefield enemies, the Oromo. In 1992, the Oromo observed an American-brokered truce with the Tigrayans. As I prepared to travel to Ethiopia for the elections, I could not fathom how the Ethiopian political world would indeed be turned upside down with the culturally alien democratic elections advocated by the political missionaries from the West. But then, the Tigrayans

controlling Ethiopia were allowing foreign observers to monitor their election process. In every spare moment, my mind dwelt on this Ethiopian paradox of Tigrayan-sponsored democratic elections leading to Oromo empowerment. (I later learned that several million dollars' worth of U.S. aid, desperately needed by the Tigrayans' government, was contingent upon the holding of the 1992 elections.)

The most important aspect of the countrywide elections of 1992 was democratic integration of the Oromo people and their Oromo Liberation Front into the new, post-Derg Ethiopia. In addition to the 1993 independence of the province of Eritrea, if, as many of them desire, the Oromo were to secede from Ethiopia, the polynational country would undoubtedly fragment still further into political chaos and economic nonviability.

Monitoring the Election Strife

My immediate observer group, comprised of seven ardent observers using three Toyota Land Cruisers, was among the very first to roll out of Addis Ababa for the field assignment. In western Oromia, our assignment was monitoring and reporting on the registration and campaign processes prior to a democratic election and then on the election itself. No idea of a loyal opposition existed on either side in the election campaigns, however. One either supports a political-military front or is its enemy who must suffer the consequences of this blatant offense. Fear was in the air, and for good reason.

Enough fuel was displayed in our vehicles' roof-mounted Jerry cans to create a blazing inferno from a potshot in the overweaponed countryside, and we carried cases of German bottled water and ready-to-eat U.S. Army meals. Our white vehicles were emblazoned with the Joint International Observer group's emblem, a dove and a large eye, in blue and white. "Yêfêrênjibuda ayn nêw [Of foreigners' evil eye it is]," one Ethiopian remarked about this arcane, to him, new symboling. When my vehicle mate and I saw ten-year-old Oromos with hand grenades attached to their clothing, we would smile broadly and wave energetically in a friendly fashion. Rocks would have been tolerable, but fragmentation grenades . . . In the eastern part of Oromia, our counterpart observers, old and good Ethiopia hands all, had to leave the monitoring field prematurely because of the palpable direct threats to their personnel's safety.

The Joint International Observer group had not tested the short-wave radios of their three vehicles destined for western Oromia, and we never could use them for the planned crucial monitoring reports and the vital security linkage to our headquarters in Addis Ababa. Telephonic communication was available, but not always, only from western Oromia's capital of Nekemti.

"I could have told you that, if someone asked me," commented our driver, an Ethiopian army combat veteran, about the limitations of our radios. Several of our skilled and knowledgeable Ethiopian drivers were miffed at not being consulted during the JIOG's planning phase or invited to its night-before-departure briefings. These included a lengthy explanation of elaborate, on-paper, radio protocols and call signs and a question session. The white bwana still held ethnocentrically insensitive, and thereby inefficient, sway in Africa.

In the field, we found that the militarily powerful Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front and its Oromo clients engaged in systematic harassment, intimidation, coercion, illegal force, false accusations and imprisonment, and administrative measures preventing the registration of peasants and townsmen in most areas controlled by the Oromo Liberation Front. Police-state actions included jailing supporters of the

Oromo Liberation Front as “bandits” for mere acts of electioneering and partisan public speech.

One “bandit” was an accredited, overworked physician. My vehicle mate and I felt we had no authority or mandate to do anything about these political prisoners. Beyond discussing with their government captors and visibly taking notes on the facts of their detention, we said only that imprisoning the opposition was not part of a bona fide election process.

A pair of German election observers, one an escapee from the German Democratic Republic, went much further, however. They insisted, successfully, that they had the authority to visit the political prisoners, tape-record interviews with and photograph them. A few of these “bandits” were consequently released. When I asked the Germans about their authority for their action regarding the political prisoners, the reply was: “*Wie meinen Sie? Was meinen Sie?*” Yes indeed, what did I mean? What possibly could I mean under the circumstances, repressive and dangerous to the political prisoners? Whatever the appearance of us American observers, the Germans were not candidates for citizenship in a police state.

The Transitional Government of Ethiopia continued to place all manner of road-blocks in the path of its formal election process, the main one being not sending the crucial election registration books and registration cards to the many rural areas firmly dedicated to its opposition, the Oromo Liberation Front. Thus no voting could occur in these districts oriented to the OLF. The government thereby ensured that it did not suffer the defeat and the consequences that a democratic election would engender. (Registration for voting included the designation of a person’s ethnic group, a cause for intimidation.)

The OLF often retaliated in kind against acts of violence by government-controlled forces, and it sometimes attacked without immediate provocation. In western Oromia, all the observers from both sides received written lists, sometimes quite long, reporting attacks on and imprisonment of people and destruction of property. Deadly violence, however, was relatively rare until the end of the period for the election process. Some of the problems with registration must be attributed to unfamiliarity with a culturally alien, complexly bureaucratic procedure and to numerous local snafus.

Oromos privately voiced their fears to me and to other observers. For example, in one tension-ridden town, the proprietress of a coffeehouse and brothel, astonishingly, would not take money from me and my vehicle mate for our coffees. She was so relieved, she said, to have us coming through town periodically in our Toyota. My fellow observer and I hoped that our temporary and powerless presence did not imply to local people something we could not ensure, protection for free political and other expression. Such speech in Oromia is at best foolhardy and can be personally lethal. (Some Oromo thought we might be in their area for mundane matters, such as providing vaccine for their diseased livestock.)

My vehicle mate and I found only a bare handful of Oromo Liberation Front offices in the approximately two-thirds of western Oromia controlled by the transitional government. When we visited one such office, the two young Oromo Liberation Front irregulars were astonished to see us, for they placed their AK-47 assault rifles, hastily drawn as we entered, behind a wooden counter. While we sat chatting with them about the election process, first a policeman and then a surveillance type of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia came in and stared at us and asked what we were doing in the OLF post. They then stood within earshot outside the doorway.

My co-observer and I patiently worked on many problems and contradictions in election activities. At one election precinct in a small city, we found that the registration of voters was greatly retarded, and reduced, because the client-Oromo member of the mandated three-man registration committee, including a “neutral” and an OLF representative, consistently arrived several hours after the office opened early each morning. Local Oromo and Amhara complained vociferously to us about this reduction of their right to register. At first it was difficult to catch the young uniformed client-Oromo soldier, who was bivouacked in a camp about two hours’ walk outside of town. He informed me that he could not possibly arrive earlier because of his lengthy morning trek.

In a reply well polished in dealing with my students, I told him to arise, if necessary, at 4:00 A.M. or earlier to fulfill his obligation as one of the three necessary registrars at the precinct. My request was entirely unreasonable; he glowered. I recorded his name and his explanation and reply to me in my notebook and next asked the assembled crowd of more than fifty persons what day it was, then recording their responsive symbolic factoid. Never before had my ever-present ethnologist’s field notepad wielded such power as during that June. After all, our radio was not functioning and the city lacked telephone service to Addis Ababa: I did not have a communication link to stand on. The next day, the errant client-Oromo registrar arrived twenty minutes early. His commander had ordered him to take lodging at one of the client-Oromo buildings in town.

Client-Oromo troops were supposed to be stationed in their truce camps, but they loomed as an intimidating armed uniformed presence in the towns. Our local protests over this election violation were to no avail, although some troopers then began to appear without their guns. Nevertheless, those opposed to the transitional government felt endangered. As a result of the success with the tardy client-Oromo registrar, one gray-haired elder made a public show of thanking me and grabbing my hand and kissing it while a throng beamed in approval. I was mildly embarrassed by this display, but far more apprehensive over his personal safety. A week or so later, he came by to talk to me in Nekemti as he fled from his province and the client-Oromo. When he left, we embraced and kissed each other twice on each cheek, in the manner of two Amhara friends.

One of the most telling observer experiences was with the three-man Zonal Election Committee for western Oromia, consisting of a “neutral” chairman, assigned from a TGE agency in Addis Ababa and partisan client-Oromo and Oromo Liberation Front members. The committee’s mission was to serve as the final level of appeal in western Oromia regarding disputes over procedure and charges of foul play in the election processes, accordingly safeguarding the success of the elections.

At our first meeting with this pivotal committee, the chairman would not answer my opening general questions, to tell us observers the well-known, publicly announced date of the election, June 21, or the names of the two partisan members sitting next to him — also public knowledge and men with whom we had earlier chatted amiably. So much for my old textbook field practice of beginning with easy, bland questions. The neutral chairman said he needed instruction from Addis Ababa before he could deal with the foreigners who came to observe in his province. He was to remain constantly ill at ease with the Joint International Observer group presence.

Several days later, this neutral chairman appointed by the transitional government expelled the opposition Oromo Liberation Front member from the zonal committee. The stated reason was that the opposing leader had been late for meetings on two occa-

sions. This act solved the problem of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front's opposition raising difficult questions and concerns not being addressed. Accordingly, I made a telephone call to JIOG headquarters at the comfortable Hilton Hotel in Addis Ababa regarding this highly destructive action. At first, the JIOG person said this was just one of the problems that I should expect to encounter in the field and wanted to dismiss my report without recording it. After some words, I convinced him of the gravity of this "minor incident" and had him agree to file a formal report to the transitional government. The OLF man was reinstated in a few days, after someone on high realized the implications of his expulsion. The highly partisan EPRDF's Transitional Government of Ethiopia was not and could not realistically be considered a neutral party to the elections, any more than we in the United States could have solely the Democrats or Republicans administer our national electoral process. By my conscientious, unrelenting effort, I had provided the transitional government's election process with at least one element of legitimacy. I wondered whether I was a provider of fig leaves to both the Ethiopian and American governments.

The Election Shambles

A week before the election date of June 21, I had assessed and privately said to my fellow observers that there would be no elections in the Oromo region. As it turned out, I was not quite correct in this assessment.

Complaining, four days before the twenty-first, that the election process was rigged and unfair, the Oromo Liberation Front withdrew from the elections. The OLF later withdrew from the transitional government.⁶ The TGE canceled the elections in the part of Oromia controlled by the OLF. But the government allowed elections to proceed in places tightly held by its own forces, as in Nekemti. At such sites, a slate of all-Oromo-client candidates ran unopposed. On election day, we observers were told by JIOG headquarters and American embassy personnel to "monitor" (hence, legitimate) this one-party balloting, an electoral fraud that gave "stuffing the ballot box" a good name. I did not intend to help make genuine a coercive police-state election.

During the day of briefing after their arrival in Addis Ababa, several American observers expressed to a facilitator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) their view that we might be serving as "window dressing" for a "show election" of the military government of Ethiopia. The USAID representative replied publicly that it was not at all the U.S. government's intention for American observers to serve as window dressing. I took him at his word. Accordingly, on June 19 I said I would not so serve on the day of the coercive one-party election in western Oromia. But this decision became moot.

With reports of increasing unrest and marked armed violence in the south, including Oromia, reaching the concerned Joint International Observer group headquarters in Addis Abba, our instructions for our activities in the field constantly changed. We were, first, ordered to stop our customary travels behind Oromo Liberation Front lines and work only in the EPRDF-controlled areas. (The Oromo of the Liberation Front, with whose members I had many intimate conversations, was, logically, extremely friendly to us.) Then, we were told to remain strictly inside Nekemti town and next we were allowed to range a limited distance out of this town. Finally, we were instructed that on June 22, for their personal safety, the remaining Joint International Observer group observers in western Oromia, as a group, were either to be flown or to drive in convoy

to Addis Ababa. This full withdrawal would be on the day after I and two other observers had JIOG orders to complete the group's previously scheduled arrival by us in Addis Ababa on July 21. Our two-day trip, in a single vehicle on the sole road to this metropolis, was without incident.

Because the JIOG had, from the beginning, booked my fellow observer and me to fly out of Ethiopia the morning after the elections, July 22, its headquarters in Addis Ababa had explicitly instructed us to get tickets on the sole flight out of Nekemti town in the days prior to the election. The two-engine plane was solidly booked with frightened, mostly Amhara women and children fleeing to the safety of the national capital. We were told to displace two of these passengers, using our superior social clout as foreigner-observers. In other words, we were ordered to depart, so to speak, on "the last train from Paris," by kicking off two refugees. What would *Casablanca's* Rick have thought of such behavior?

My co-observer and I went through the motions of talking to the Ethiopian Airlines agent in Nekemti to see just what the consequences of our actions would be. To please the Joint International Observer group and the transitional government, the agent was willing to bump two of the hapless women and children escapees for us. The two of us decided to drive out of Nekemti, instead of flying. It was a far better thing we did, in this the worst of times. After all, we reflected, the traditional American male norm was "women and children first." We reported to our JIOG controllers that it was impossible to guarantee the airplane seats from Nekemti but that they should try to secure them for us at a central office of the Ethiopian Airlines in their own Hilton Hotel in Addis Ababa. So we drove.

At first, the JIOG had directed me and two other observers from western Oromia to return by air to Addis Ababa. This was supposed to be on election day, a day without air service, after our early morning observations of some voting in Nekemti. After changes in directives, we were ordered to be in transit by road beginning the day before the elections. Thus, only by chance, we observed some Leninist one-party "*da*" balloting in Ambo town, former Shewa province, for which we had no assignment, introduction, or familiarity whatsoever. The two other observers accompanying me also acted as witnesses in this informal, uninformed capacity.

The leader of the Eritrean peacekeepers in western Oromia, mediating the truce between the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front and the Oromo Liberation Front, was an acquaintance of mine from years ago in Paris who came to see me. Warmly holding my hand, in the customary manner of a friendly Tigrayan, he quietly informed me that because of combat actions in the region he was withdrawing, for their security, his peacekeepers from the far west of Oromia. For the same reasons, our fellow three intrepid election observers in that area were flown out, leaving behind our third Toyota.

The OLF forces began to mobilize and move out of their truce-imposed cantonments. One such force overran some Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front troops north of Nekemti; another force in the far west attacked a government election vehicle and its escorting Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front troops. The EPRDF began multiple responses. Like chess pieces, troops and tanks were being deployed by the Transitional Government of Ethiopia for post-election enforcement of its authority. Prudently flying low, on June 20, a Soviet-built, military helicopter (one of a few still in repair) came to Nekemti and, on June 21, I observed four empty flatbed tank carriers moving west toward Nekemti along the road from Addis Ababa.

(Tanks are not run long distances cross-country for engagements, but instead are transported to save wear and tear.) The EPRDF might, perhaps, be a novice at free elections, but enforcement of social control — that was its expert activity.

The Aftermath of the Election

At a post-election evening meeting of JIOG people that I attended in Addis Abba, a U.S. congressman visiting the capital city for the election day said the following about the voting and about Meles Zenawi, president of Ethiopia under the transitional government: President Meles was a concerned leader; there were (only) some “problems” with the election; and the leaving of the truce camps by the Oromo Liberation Front had nothing to do with the election process! “Aren’t congressmen insightful?” one American observer said afterward, and other Ethiopia hands from America agreed with him as they smiled.

In any event, the EPRDF made a fundamental error in policy when it followed an outmoded Leninist ideology of using federated ethnicity, that is, a union of Soviets of specific cultures, as the basis for its reconstruction of the Ethiopian polity. Ethnic identity is the basis for the new administrative regions of Ethiopia. Reinforcement of nationalistic ethnicity and the divisiveness of ethnocentrism and sectarianism were the harvest to be reaped from the Leninist seeds being sown by the transitional government. The former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union are factious and unstable examples of such Leninist policy for a state based on ethnic blocs. A blundering and potentially bloody miscalculation of this kind by the EPRDF merely feeds movements for the “Biafraization” of the country, for example, for the Oromo Liberation Front’s well-supported movement for an independent Oromia. It is to be hoped that, in their near-stalemated political contest, the EPRDF and the Oromo Liberation Front will not eventually turn Ethiopia into another former Yugoslavia.

To follow the elections of 1992, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia officially planned for a multiparty democracy in 1993. After the elections, Tigrayan and Eritrean forces, continuing their cooperation since 1987, moved through far western Oromia, first encircling and then reducing the Oromo Liberation Front as a military threat to the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front.

The transitional government became increasingly coercive and unwilling to allow pluralistic dissent or exercise of basic freedoms. Holding private property became ever more an anathema. As was experienced by the election organizers of the Oromo Liberation Front, disagreement by anyone with the Tigrayan Marxists in control of the TGE became unpatriotic and criminal. Dozens of criticizing Ethiopian journalists have been imprisoned.

Matters came to a head in January 1993 at the campus of Addis Ababa University, where faculty members and students openly criticized the transitional government, its policies, and its suppression of ideas. EPRDF troops fired at assembled students, killing at least one and wounding others. The Transitional Government of Ethiopia then dismissed without due process forty of the faculty members and administrators and directly took control of the university.

On September 7, 1993, EPRDF troops shot and killed and wounded dozens of civilians in a church in Gonder town. The praying congregation had refused to scatter at the command of the soldiers who were attempting to arrest a priest. In December 1993, a Conference on Peace and Reconciliation met mainly at the request of political groups

not in the transitional government. But the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Force would not participate and arrested several of the conference delegates. In January 1994, the TGE expelled two nonclient ethnic fronts from the government because of their participation in this conference. The true base of support for the TGE had narrowed largely to the Tigrayans and their Tigrayan People's Liberation Front, their client fronts, plus a few quite small organizations. Former president Jimmy Carter tried to mediate this dangerous situation, in vain.⁷

The follow-up elections to those of 1992 were finally held on June 5, 1994. Not surprisingly, creating Soviet-scale results, the EPRDF won 89 percent of seats for the new national assembly. On September 20, 1994, according to Amnesty International, hundreds of peaceful persons demonstrating against the summary arrest of a former university professor and dean were imprisoned and beaten.

On April 19, 1995, Amnesty International charged that during its four-year rule, the government of Ethiopia detained thousands without charges, made dozens vanish, and tortured others. In September 1995, the first U.S. Peace Corps volunteers since 1977 entered Ethiopia. Some were posted to the high school in Nekemti. On October 7, 1996, the Committee to Protect Journalists, in New York, released its report, "Clampdown in Addis," criticizing the government's repression of journalists. In December 1996, Somalia and Ethiopian forces clashed near Dolo.

During 1997, Amnesty International requested that the Ethiopian government release the Oromo leaders it arrested and imprisoned, without having been charged with any offense, during its crackdowns against the organizations of these people. Many of these leaders had merely been protesting violations of human rights by the government. The government accused the Oromo Liberation Front of the 1997 bombings in Harer and Addis Ababa, something denied by the OLF. And in 1998, the Tigreans of Eritrea and the Tigreans of Ethiopia went to war, replete with attacks of jet fighter bombers, over some contested border strips of semidesert.

Today, Oromo client administrators, now governing Oromia, have not put a stop to the ethnic cleansing in their region of Amhara and other non-Oromo persons by Oromo militants. In the Somalia region, formerly the Ogaden area of Ethiopia, Oromia, and other regions, strife flares between local people and Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front soldiers.

With the Oromo Liberation Front outside the government, no effective balance to Tigrayan power exists. In the vacuum of the disengagement of the OLF, the client-Oromo assumed power under the aegis of the EPRDF. Through decentralization of power to ethnic regions having puppet governance, the Tigrayans maintain control of Ethiopia. Support from the West, including the United States in its Panglossian illusion, continues for the Tigrayan government. In return for a stable government — thus, no unpalatable TV newscasts — the United States settles for the rhetoric rather than the substance of democracy in Ethiopia. Rewarding this government by supplying the second-largest amount of aid it gives to an African country, the United States does little to have the EPRDF seek an accommodation with the majority of Oromo, Amhara, Somali, and others not recognizing its ethnic client organizations.

Perhaps the Ethiopian elections of 1992 did not fail in their intent. Perhaps there was no paradox in their conception in Addis Ababa — or in Washington. As regarding the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Sudan, and the Congo, the Bush and Clinton administrations desired to see no, hear no, and speak no evils of massive fatalities and suffering from ethnic strife in the Horn of Africa. To admit to the existence of such atrocities

requires moral policymaking and leadership resulting in corrective action, unpopular for a U.S. president seeking affirmation from the public opinion polls — and the voting polls. ☘

This speech, originally delivered at the Distinguished Lecture Series, University of Massachusetts Boston, December 12, 1994, has been updated by the author.

Notes

1. What follows applies to the former Welega province, now the western part of Oromia, as based upon my firsthand in-field experiences, discussions with subjects of research, and events reported to me by nine fellow observers in the province. My comments as an ethnologist, with more than three decades of experience in Ethiopia and Ethiopian affairs, do not necessarily reflect the views of any other person or organization.
2. Emperor Menelik the Great, an Amhara, added by armed force what became his southern, frequently Oromo, provinces to the largely Amharan and Tigrayan core provinces of Christian Abyssinia in the north. Menelik's conquests realized an Abyssinian control of southern Ethiopia.
3. Today, as in the past, the Oromo refer to their Amhara-Tigrayan conquerors generally as *Habesha* (Abyssinians) and individually and locally as *neftenya* (rifle bearers). The Abyssinians were the newly superimposed regional armed elite, and even in the 1960s carried a rifle as a symbol of power on ceremonial occasions. In the past Amhara-Tigrayans labeled the Oromo as the "scourge of God" and today refer to Oromo by the prejudicial term *Galla*, which has a range of denotations and connotations, but it could best be explained as the Abyssinians' label for the menacing hordes of a non-Christian, African "other." For *Habesha*, *Galla* are the kind of people to be politically subordinated and culturally marginalized, including persecuted and discriminated against in a wide range of overt and covert ways. During the past century or so, being Oromo means being mentally and socially marred by Abyssinians' views of history. The interpretation of such marring is nurtured, in part, by an Oromo intelligentsia residing in the Horn and scattered globally in the Oromo diaspora. The Oromo are usually characterized by Western scholars as egalitarian, by which some manner of being democratic is meant. That is, in their traditional generational system of social organization consisting of age sets and age grades (*gada*), some Oromo groups still have and most formerly had married men discussing and initiating political and religious policies and actions, including juridical.
4. Meles Zenawi, a Marxist Tigrayan, is the president of Ethiopia. He heads the post-Derg government of Ethiopia and is the leader of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), including its ethnic client organizations. Besides their homeland in the former Tigray province on the southern border of Eritrea, the Tigrayans are the largest and dominant ethnic group of Eritrea. Tigrayan-dominated Eritrea was allowed its independence in 1993, against Amhara protests, by the Tigrayan-controlled transitional government. To the anger of the Amhara, Eritreans held many government and private commercial jobs in Addis Ababa, the capital of a country now no longer that of the Eritreans yet one with great unemployment for the educated.
5. The Derg's control was effected in large part by means of several billion dollars' worth of Soviet military aid and advice used to kill and maim hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians. Many were murdered by the state and buried in secret mass graves. Owing to the Derg's doctrinaire central planning and control of resources and its relentless warfare, many hundred thousands of other Ethiopians starved to death or became displaced refugees.
6. Separately, in its region to the north, the independent party of the once-dominant and numerous Amhara, the All-Amhara People's Organization, also withdrew from the election. Other non-EPRDF fronts withdrew from the elections in their respective areas. Elections were held in most areas, however.
7. On March 23, 1994, the Carter Center reported: "After extensive discussions with leaders of opposition groups and with the government, we have been unable to find a mutually acceptable basis for direct talks between the government and opposition groups."

Monitoring Elections

Padraig O'Malley

Padraig O'Malley was a member of international delegations monitoring elections in the Philippines, South Africa, and Mozambique. These delegations were organized by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), Washington, D.C. O'Malley's opinions, observations, and reflections on these elections are entirely his own and in no way reflect the opinions of NDI.

During the past ten years, I have taken part in a number of international observer missions to elections in various parts of the world. This evening I want to talk about these in particular — the Philippine elections in February 1986; the South African election in April 1994; and the Mozambican elections in November 1994 — to see whether there are features common to all and unique to each and whether monitoring practices have evolved in new directions since the end of the Cold War.

The Philippine elections were the first to achieve celebrity status, for a number of reasons, I think. First, they represented the impact of the globalization of the media — the media were the message, and the fact of an election being observed changed the nature and context of the elections themselves. Second, it was a high-profile election, pitting a longtime aging dictator who, let it be said, had achieved legendary status in many parts of his country, against a homely housewife, Cory Aquino — widow of Benigno Aquino, a man murdered in 1983 by agents of Marcos as he stepped off a plane in Manila — returning from a number of years in exile to avenge her dead husband. Third, and perhaps more important in the long run, was that the democracy movement was beginning to take shape in the mid-1980s, and many authoritarian dictatorships were being challenged for the first time by a variety of pro-democracy movements and nongovernmental organizations committed to the development of functioning civil societies.

One-party states were beginning to come under critical scrutiny from within their own countries, and voices calling for multiparty electoral systems were being heard for the first time.

Typically, an election monitor is responsible for assuring that the elections are carried out in accordance with the electoral code or the election laws established by an independent electoral commission (IEC). An IEC has the overall responsibility for administering the election, for ensuring that the elections are violence-free and without intimidation, for convincing the voters that their votes will be cast in secrecy, for carrying out the counting of the votes, and for being the final arbiter in decisions regarding votes or groups of votes whose validity has been challenged. In Mozambique, for example, an X had to be placed beside the symbol of the party or the photograph of the head of the party. Even [check marks] in the appropriate boxes were, under the election laws, invalid, although there was no doubt as to how the voter intended to vote. And in the end, an IEC has the responsibility to judge whether or not the election is fair and

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free, as does the monitor. All in all, daunting tasks, especially in countries such as the Philippines and Mozambique, where the supporting infrastructure is largely absent, administrative capacity sadly lacking, and widespread corruption rampant at both the official and unofficial levels, which is, by the way, largely taken for granted — a way of life rather than an exception.

For the moment, I will distinguish between retail and wholesale fraud.

Retail fraud takes place at the election site. It includes:

1. *Multiple voting*: bringing votes from one district to another.
2. *Multiple voting by the individual*. As a way of addressing this, it has over the years been the practice of election administrators to mark the back of the of the hand or a finger of each voter with an indelible dye. However, often the dyes are tampered with and in many cases can be easily erased.
3. *Helping the old or the illiterate to vote, and in effect voting for them*. I should add that each party usually is entitled to have a number of its own monitors present in the ballot area. They are in a position to monitor the actions of the voting authorities and of individual voters and subsequently to challenge their actions.
4. *The issuance of false ID cards*. Making credible duplicates of voter ID cards has been a common practice over the years, and degrees of misuse vary depending upon whether voters have to preregister to vote or whether any ID card will suffice.
5. *Hampering people's ability to vote by supplying them with incorrect information regarding balloting procedures*. In most countries that are holding democratic elections for the first time, many, and often most, of the voters are illiterate. For some time prior to the elections, nongovernmental organizations, sometimes the country's IECs, which are often, even if unfairly so, regarded as a government rubber stamp, and international organizations that specialize in election monitoring, carry out voter education programs which try to extend the rudiments of the democratic process and educate voters how to vote. In this case, you could say that the monitoring itself on the days of the elections is the last step in a long and arduous process. Making it difficult for voter education programs is easy, especially in one-party states where the state and the party have, for all intents and purposes, become interchangeable.
6. *Often absent, as well, is the presence of an independent medium, especially television and to a lesser extent radio*. Television is invariably state-owned and during state elections is used in a blatantly partisan way. Part of the problem here is that opposition parties do not object since they, too, if they were in power, would behave similarly. Using the machinery of the state to influence elections is routinely regarded as one of the perks of incumbency.

Which raises an important point: election monitoring has taken on a much broader frame of reference over the past several years, and again I would probably use the Philippine elections as a benchmark. Monitoring is much more concerned now with *all* aspects of the electoral process that contributes to an unequal playing field and with the elimination of barriers which contribute to that inequality. Leveling the playing field is

now the phrase of the day, and that means ensuring the conditions for voter education programs, overseeing voter registration drives, evaluating the media for equal coverage, guaranteeing equal access to the paraphernalia of elections, including consultation in drawing up the ballot itself, and agreements on what demarcation on the ballot will be required, how ballots are regarded as being valid; procedures and verification processes for ballot boxes, ensuring their transportation to the main counting centers, procedures for counting and for dealing with vote challenges, and reconciliation procedures to confirm that the number of votes cast at the ballot boxes is equal to the number of voters verified to have been admitted to the polling station.

Wholesale fraud takes two forms, and many variations fall within the ambit of both. Among the variations: seals on ballot boxes are tampered with, fraudulent ballots are inserted and the real contents dumped; ballot boxes full of fraudulent votes are added to the tally; ballot boxes are lost; ballot boxes materialize out of cyberspace; pirate ballot stations operate. And most serious, perhaps because it can be carried out on a more massive scale and is more sophisticated and difficult to detect, is computer fixing, through which electoral data are altered to produce fraudulent tallies.

In keeping with the advancing technologies of electoral processes, wholesale and retail fraud today are much more difficult to carry out because of the evolution of more sophisticated parallel counts or quick counts, as they are often called.

In the remainder of my talk, I will argue that in the post-Cold War order of things, the function of election monitoring has been altered drastically, that its primary function is not to ensure a free and fair election, as we define that in the classical sense, but to ensure that the results produce a government that is regarded by the parties to the election and the electorate as being *legitimate*, and that the acknowledgment of legitimacy in turn produces political stability. The purpose of elections, especially in countries making the transition from one-party states to a multiparty democracy, is not to produce a free and fair result per se, but to lay the groundwork for developing a *sustainable* democracy, so that a form of government and its institutions will slowly pave the way for party building, capacity building, institution building, and the development of trust among the major actors who facilitate accommodation and compromise among the parties.

Democracy is a learned behavior. In formerly one-party states, undemocratic practices must be unlearned. This does not happen overnight, but is a slow, painstaking process requiring constant attention and a vigorous, vocal civil society to back it up.

Some other useful observations provide a subtext for evaluating the work of international monitoring agencies.

1. There is no "ideal" democratic system.
2. Democracy cannot flourish without the development of trust, tolerance, and a willingness to compromise.
3. Democracy is about behavior, behavior is based on convictions, convictions are rooted in values, convictions and values can be taught, and behaviors can be learned — or, as is necessary in many cases, behavior can be unlearned.
4. Many African countries were handicapped at the outset.

5. The globalization of communications reinforces the trends of democratization. The fax and the cellular phone are the latest instruments of communication technology to shape the way in which elections are conducted, especially in countries lacking electricity.
6. Although a transition is singular to a particular country, transitions, whether from authoritarian or military or communism to democracy, share many features.
7. Democracy is not edible.
8. Expectations must be kept in check.
9. In many cases, democracy is the remedy of last resort.
10. Refugee problems undermine democratization.
11. Questions of ethnicity and tribalism are being more openly acknowledged and do not seem to elicit the suspicion or defensiveness they once engendered.
12. In most underdeveloped countries, there is a very limited understanding of the role of a public broadcasting system in a democratic society.
13. A Code of Conduct, to which all parties agree, proved its efficacy during the 1989 Namibia elections and can be a very useful ancillary tool.
14. International observer groups have come to play a vital role in transitions. Their presence changes the nature of the process being observed. They both confer legitimacy and make it more difficult for a ruling regime to cheat. They inspire confidence in the process, thus encouraging people to participate.
15. Internal monitoring groups play a similar role and have a similar impact. Churches, in particular, possess the organizational structures to facilitate countrywide monitoring networks. To perform this function effectively, however, the churches must be seen to be neutral, which is often a problem since they frequently see themselves as part of the larger liberation movement.
16. In a world in which competition for resources has become more ethnocentric than ever, the self-interest of the more affluent states discourages altruism and foreign aid. There is little acknowledgment that over the past twenty years, authoritarian colonialism, leaving behind administrative structures rather than nation-states, spawned authoritarian, autocratic, single-party states skewed by artificial borders and often antagonistic admixtures of ethnic groups, create in substantial measure the convoluted and artificial politics that have emerged in many parts of the world, particularly in Africa, often with the most heinous consequences.

Let me turn now to specific elections. I will give the least time to the Philippines and the most to South Africa for a variety of reasons that I hope will become apparent. Mozambique provides a further example of where the new center may be drifting.

The Philippine elections in 1986, pitting the poignant Cory Aquino against the malevolent tyrant Ferdinand Marcos, had all the ingredients of a soap opera. This was not an election about issues but about some mythical bout between Good and Evil, as personified by the two candidates. Cory, the darling of the West, a newfound celebrity as

she returned to the Philippines to oust the man who many believed to be her husband's murderer. There were no issues, as such, beyond the corruption of Marcos's twenty-one years in office. Indeed, perhaps the one issue that was and remains the issue in the Philippines is land reform, and since both the Marcos and Aquinos families come from large land-holding baronies, their positions on the issue were at best perfunctorily different, questions of nuance rather than substance. What made the Philippine elections unique was the fact that its outcome, in large measure, was determined by the media — namely the international media.

My own situation at the time will suffice to illustrate the point. I was monitoring in an area in the far south — Nindanamo — supposedly a stronghold of the Communists. My three colleagues and I monitored a dozen balloting stations, took frequent soundings from the quick-count people, watched the counting at each of the stations, saw the parties put their imprints on the waxed seals of the boxes in which ballots were to be transported to the provincial capital. We followed the boxes and saw them safely to their destination. All appeared to be in order and, to tell the truth, we were a little disappointed since it is the unstated dream of every election monitor to find massive, large-scale fraud that will bring matters to a screeching halt. Back in Manila, where we and the rest of the delegation spent a full day debriefing, few of the forty or so in the delegation had found anything more than retail fraud here and there and at some stations the military stood inside the allowed limits and appeared to pose a rather intimidating presence.

Meanwhile, however, state television, which had been covering the elections, had various reports coming in from all over the country. The television link was severed abruptly when results from several areas suggested Aquino was doing better than expected.

Immediately, panic ensued as delegations began to ring their homes, offices, and friends to find out what ABC, CBS, and NBC were reporting, and their reports of vote rigging became the basis for the conclusion of many delegations, including ours, that the election was not free and fair. Simply put, we could not reach a conclusion that might allow for the bad guy's winning. We could not be out of line with what the conventional opinion makers had predicted before the elections: that should Marcos win, he would have stolen it.

It wasn't until about 2:00 A.M. Sunday morning (January 1986) that conclusive proof of rigging came in. The computers were cooking the books, which had been preprogrammed to manipulate the data when it was fed in. No television crew came upon this, no sleuthing monitor was on the ball. Just a computer operator who blew the whistle when certain weird results that were counterintuitive began to emerge.

Marcos was greedy. He decided to steal big, thus focusing attention on election data that otherwise would have been overlooked. Had he stolen small, he probably would have gotten away with it. One thing for sure: he would not have had to flee the country in the manner in which he did.

The South African elections had also a lot to do with being on the right side. Any attempt at overt stealing would have been easily detected since the country was literally crawling with election monitors, from God knows where, with fleets of television cameras in their wake. In one sense, the results were a foregone conclusion: It was a given that at the national level Nelson Mandela would easily prevail, the only question being whether he would get more than the magic two-thirds of the vote that would give him, in effect, a free hand to draw up the country's final constitution.

There were, in fact, delays and irregularities; in some places, ballot papers were hours late in showing up; in others, ballot stations took it upon themselves to stay open past the 7:00 P.M. closing time. Because of inefficiency in administration, some people stood in line for hours before getting the opportunity to vote. ID cards were easily forged. Nevertheless, at the end of the voting monitors could only say that the elections had been violence-free (true), that intimidation appeared to have been negligible (not so true), and despite some irregularities, the voting, they concluded, was fair and free. That, too, was the message of the international media and their respective commentators. Despite the fact that the counting of votes had barely started, the African National Congress (ANC) declared victory and a triumphant Nelson Mandela was hailed internationally as president-elect. After three centuries of oppression and almost fifty of the inhumanity of apartheid, justice was not just done but was seen to be done.

The vote count, however, became a nightmare. Hundreds of ballot boxes were unaccounted for, millions of votes lost. The ANC accused the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) of vote-rigging in KwaZulu-Natal and the IFP counterattacked with allegations that the ANC had been involved in voter sabotage. The National Party weighed in with a variety of complaints about both ANC and IFP practices. The neatly constructed fiction of the previous days began to unravel. Ominous predictions threatened from the sidelines. And a desperate independent electoral commission simply stopped counting and gave the results.

And what miraculous results they were. Everyone was a winner. Buthelezi and the IFP won KwaZulu Natal with 50.3 percent of the vote. The National Party (NP) won the Western Cape, the ANC won majorities in the other seven provincial parliaments, and a very solid, if not two-thirds majority in the National Government — enough to ensure that the ANC would completely dominate the proposed government of national unity. Thus the “miracle.” But let us look at it in a little more detail.

- First, the Record of Understanding signed between the African National Congress and the National Party in September 1993 signaled that the transfer of power had begun. From that point on, the ANC and NP brokered the process — the other parties were left to follow or to marginalize themselves.
- The Inkatha Freedom Party, until the last minute, said it would not participate in the elections. In KwaZulu-Natal this was of particular significance, since the political rivalry between the ANC and the IFP in the region was ferocious, violent, and to a large extent uncontrollable. In the weeks leading up to the election, as efforts to entice the IFP to become part of the process increased, violence escalated at exponential rates in Natal. Were the IFP not to participate in Natal, thus giving the province to the ANC by default, civil war would occur in Natal, which would spread along the Eastern Reef. But equally as troubling was the fact that if the IFP *did* contest the election and lose in KwaZulu-Natal, Buthelezi would not accept the results and once again, the specter of civil war would loom. It was apparent to the leadership of the ANC that should the IFP fail to win in Natal and scream “fraud,” Buthelezi would reject the legitimacy of the results with all the tumult that would follow. Indeed, the ANC in the region threatened to go to court to have the results invalidated, but the national leadership made a decision:

better have Buthelezi in the tent — not to finish Lyndon Johnson's famous adage. The alternative: civil war in Natal, an Angola/Mozambique scenario that would ensure that little — very little — foreign investment would come the way of South Africa. It would only prove that, as many had predicted, South Africa would go the way of the rest of Africa. Hence *stability* became the overriding consideration.

A similar logic applied to the Western Cape, although it is clear enough that the colored vote there swung behind the NP, one of the striking ironies of history: you side with your oppressor because, as bad as he has been, you fear that his successor, the multitude of the oppressed, might be even more oppressive . . .

The “we-all-win” result conveyed legitimacy to the process.

Hence, South Africa could put forward the new South Africa as the model of a state making a successful political transition, from the Old Order to the New.

Since April 1994, when the elections took place, I have spoken to the most senior people in the African National Congress, the former National Party government, and the IFP. To a person, they deny that a formal deal was struck in a smoke-filled or, probably these days, a smoke-free room. But, then, on the other hand, no one will deny that informal understandings emerged, particularly that one set of results would plunge South Africa into an Angola/Mozambique situation with all the horrible consequences that would entail. Thus, sharing, allowing all sides a stake in winning and a vindication of their own positions as pronounced in the past, would give the new governments, both regional and national, legitimacy. In this sense, a result that produced a stable government accepted by the people, that is, a government whose legitimacy was accepted, was far more important than one which was free and fair.

This trend toward legitimacy and stability, at the expense of other considerations, began to emerge in the late 1980s when international monitoring teams would often find themselves at the short end of the stick when the rival political parties that had fought the elections refused to accept their adjudications and took to boycotting Parliament or engaging in armed resistance or in other forms of instability.

For the past thirty years, the United Nations was heavily engaged in electoral verification and the provision of technical electoral assistance in the context of decolonization. During the past five years, however, the UN has found itself, somewhat to its own surprise, continuously involved in the business of free and fair elections. The Namibia experience, followed by the UN's success in electoral verification in Haiti and Nicaragua, created a catalytic effect. The democratic ideal had received a new vitality from world events, and the UN has been recognized as a viable operational mechanism for the development and support of that idea.

In late 1991, a major debate began about the standards that the UN should uphold, and the kind of circumstances in which it should become involved, so as to strengthen national integrity, self-determination, and independence rather than to undermine them.

The General Assembly adopted an important resolution — Resolution 46/137 of December 17, 1992 — which deals with the various types of UN assistance with regard to the holding of free and fair elections. It emphasizes that all states enjoy a sovereign equality and that each state, in accordance with the support of its people, has the right to truly choose and develop its political, social, economic, and cultural systems. It also recognizes that no single political system or electoral method is equally suited to all nations and their peoples. It recognizes that the efforts of the international community

to enhance the effectiveness of the principles of periodic and genuine elections should not call into question each nation's sovereign rights, in accordance with the will of its people, freely to choose and develop its political, social, and cultural systems, whether or not they conform to the preferences of other states.

The assembly also declared that determining the will of the people requires an electoral process that provides all citizens with an equal opportunity to become candidates and to present their political views.

In more recent years, the UN has advanced criteria under which it will undertake to engage in electoral verification in an independent state.

1. The situation should have a clear international dimension.
2. The monitoring of an election or referendum should cover the entire electoral process in order to secure the conditions of freeness and fairness, and impartiality.
3. A UN presence in the electoral process at a critical point in a state's political life should be sought by the state in question.
4. There should be approval by the component organ of the UN.

As has become increasingly clear over the last several years, however, the UN has more than a lack of abundant resources. Member-states, now that the Cold War is over, use the UN to advance policies that benefit their own narrow interests, and while all give lip service to the principles for UN participation in elections in member or about-to-be-member countries, few will follow up with the resources required to make the UN presence little more than a gesture of impotence.

Problems are compounded when the ruling party takes exception to a UN presence or only agrees to it under a great deal of international pressure. The political parties that are not in power want an *effective* monitoring presence. They are profoundly suspicious of the intention of their governments.

This almost always weakens the position not only of the UN but of all international monitors. Monitoring, not surprisingly, works best when all parties give their fulsome support to it. It works far less well when a dominant government refuses to empower it, and it works worst when one party or another does not accept the electoral results or the rulings of internal and external monitoring agencies.

Some Illustrations

Under international pressure, President Daniel Arap Moi, leader of the Kenyan African National Union (KANU), scheduled multiparty elections for December 1992. They were the country's first freely contested elections since independence from Britain in 1963. Many observers, however, were of the opinion that resistance to the process of democratization made free and fair elections impossible. The Electoral Commission, the body mandated to register voters and to administer the election process, consisted solely of members nominated by Moi without the advice or counsel of, or even consultation with, the opposition. The government also refused to involve opposition parties in formulating rules governing the transitional process. Instead, the KANU-dominated Parliament passed an amendment which provided that the president had to be elected by majority vote and by at least 25 percent of the vote in at least five of the country's eight provinces, an arrangement that gave Moi a decided edge. In the elections held on

December 29, 1992, Moi was returned to office and won a comfortable margin in Parliament. Although fifteen of his twenty-one cabinet members were defeated, with the opposition split among three parties, Moi won reelection with only 36.7 percent of the votes (another legacy of the British majoritarian system).

Immediately, citing what they called across-the-board cheating and vote-rigging, leaders of Kenya's three strongest opposition parties announced that they would not accept the outcome of the elections. But theirs was a hollow opposition, distinctly lacking people power, and Moi, it could be clearly seen, had absolutely no intention of stepping down or of holding new elections. Moreover, the specter of civil war prior to the elections' well-armed and organized members of the minority Kalenzins, President Moi's ethnic group, which during his tenure had become the country's dominant elite, mounted a series of attacks against largely defenseless members of larger ethnic groups, the Kikuyu, Luo, and Luyha. Traditionally in Kenya, ethnic divisions overlap and polarize divisions. The international interest was clear. Internal unrest in Kenya would undoubtedly escalate into further destabilization in a region already badly fragmented and divided. Hence, as *The Economist* reported on February 6, 1993, "International observers, after some hemming and hawing, decided that the polls were tilted towards Mr. Moi and KANU, but that the results, nevertheless, roughly represented people's will."

Many Africans were disillusioned with the performance of electoral observers in the Kenyan elections. In an acerbic commentary, *Africa Week* said:

Despite allegations of poor administration, incidence of rigging and malpractice and electoral irregularity, the international monitoring teams seem unanimously prepared to accept the election results, despite the fact that they were never free and fair. What is most remarkable is that the positions of the observers have been varied and often contrary. What the whole process of monitoring has shown is the double standard that some of the observers are prepared to uphold. They seem to abandon the very principles they are supposed to use as yardsticks for determining whether elections are fair and free. The particular positions taken by some observers now raise crucial questions over the involvement of external observers and whether they have been or can be seen to be impartial.

What in fact was happening was that the rules of the game were changing, and they were to find their most finely honed moment during the elections in Mozambique when the government party FRELIMO, led by President Joaquim Chissamo, squared off against the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO), led by Afonso Dhlakama. Despite the fact that RENAMO pulled out of the election on the first day of balloting, a third day was added to make up for the lost first day when logistical problems in terms of getting ballots to polling stations were overwhelming, when different parts of the country continued to vote into the night on the second day, but only in areas where there was electricity, when counting took almost three weeks to complete. The results indicated that Chissamo had beaten Dhlakama, but that the margin of victory for FRELIMO was less in the National Assembly. Chissamo was prepared to offer a power-sharing government of sorts to bring about national reconciliation. Dhlakama declined this offer, but more important, he said he would accept the results, ensuring the legitimacy of the government and stability. Only then did international observers declare the election to be free and fair.

To wind up, there were presidential elections in fifteen sub-Saharan Africa countries between 1990 and 1992. In seven of them, elections were seen as being free and fair. In six countries, the exception being Angola, the incumbent was ousted and the opposition accepted the results. In four other countries, elections were not seen as free and fair, incumbents clung to power, and the opposition parties did not accept the legitimacy of the results. In short, in only one state, Angola, was the incumbent seen by international monitors to have been freely and fairly elected while the opposition vociferously and violently rejected the results, and every attempt since then to end the civil war has run into one roadblock or another.

In six countries the incumbent was ousted, and in eight countries the incumbent was returned to power under either dubious or fraudulent electoral circumstances. Moreover, opposition parties accepted the legitimacy of the results only in the six states that ousted the incumbents, providing an unsettling precedent of sorts: it would appear that in newly formed multiparty democracies, opposition parties will accept the legitimacy of the electoral results only if the incumbent is defeated. Elections in themselves are, therefore, not barometers of the prospects for a smooth transition to democracy.

One final thought, from the African writer Makua wa Mutua: "[In post-colonial countries], due to centuries of abuse and deprivation, it has been difficult and in some cases impossible to develop and sustain practices that enhance and internalize concepts of a functioning democracy." ❀

This speech was originally delivered at the Distinguished Lecture Series, University of Massachusetts Boston, December 12, 1994.

Addendum — January 1999

Paradigm Shifts?

In a recent column, “No Repeat of Our Glorious 1994,” one of South Africa’s most prominent political commentators, Kaiser Nyatumba wrote,

Many will take memories of those special days to their graves. There they were, on April 27 and 28, 1994, maids standing with their madams, labourers standing with their masters, all eager to cast a vote in our democratic national elections.

Those were probably the most cathartic days in the history of this country.

South Africa is again facing an election in a matter of months.

Although we will not be a typically “normal” country for a few more years, our politics have nevertheless begun to lose their “special” image. There may well be many in politics today who believe they are there to serve the nation, but by and large many others are there to make a living. To them, politics is an occupation like any other, and some will lie and cheat to remain in office to reap the benefits of being in parliaments or government.

A second observation came from Albie Sachs, one-time activist and presently a member of the country’s Constitutional Court. “We were able to achieve a miracle, but we can’t achieve the achievable.”

When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which was supposed to open the floodgates to the horrors of apartheid past and by some mysterious alchemy achieve reconciliation in South Africa, released its final report at the end of October 1998, it was damned by all political parties. Its full repercussions are only beginning to sink in. Truth, it did reveal; but it is an incomplete truth. Justice remains very much in the balance. Reconciliation is a far cry.

Ironically, the attempt of the African National Congress (ANC) to block publication of the report diverted attention from its more serious findings concerning the modus operandi of apartheid itself, and the commission’s unequivocal emphasis on the culpability of successive National Party governments and its all-too-willing surrogates in every sector of South African society.

For President Mandela, the responses the report elicited, especially from the ANC, must have been especially disappointing. He devoted the better part of his presidency to trying to bring about reconciliation between blacks and whites, often to the point where he was criticized by some blacks for paying more attention to ameliorating the fears of whites than with ameliorating the inequities blacks had suffered.

But President Mandela wanted to put in place the foundation stones for a nation, not to settle scores or seek retribution. The TRC has not brought about reconciliation in the here and now. Reconciliation is a process, not an instantaneous epiphany. It is not a once-over, an ending to something, a closing of the books. Rather, it is the beginning of something new, the opening of a new book that can only grow out of a process that begins with catharsis, engenders anger, invites recrimination, leads to reflection, genuflects to the need for acknowledgment, provides the road map for the way to healing, again a painful exploration, and reconciliation, again not a final closing of the wounds, but a mutual tending to each other’s wounds.

When he retires from office sometime next year, Mandela will leave a South Africa

full of contradictions, with enormous social and political challenges to overcome, a South Africa still in the process of transformation, a South Africa not yet out of the woods, not yet one in which democracy has fully taken root, although the vine is ripening.

If one were to finger the greatest failure of the Mandela years, it would perhaps come down to something very simple: the ANC simply underestimated the task it faced. Indeed, the nature and dimensions of the task itself, requiring that it transform itself almost overnight from liberation movement to government were overwhelming, and the ANC, not surprisingly, was unable to deliver on the promises it had made to the people. And it learned, too, that the learning curve is steep. As a result many blacks became disappointed with the government, and in time that disappointment has turned to some disillusionment.

According to recent surveys, this is not going to result in African voters voting for another party in the 1999 elections.. There is in effect no other party. Voters, if they wish to register their disapproval, will express their disillusionment by staying at home, resulting in a lower voter turnout. The drop in voter turnout will be the significant indicator of blacks' dissatisfaction with government, not the percentage of the vote the ANC receives.

Even though it has enjoyed an overwhelming majority in Parliament, the ANC is supersensitive to criticism, seeing it as racially motivated, and a thinly veiled insinuation that blacks simply aren't up to the task of governing. This hypersensitivity in turn has bred hubris — a propensity to dismiss all criticism, justified or not, an axiomatic response that everything that has gone wrong is somehow linked to the "legacy of apartheid," and that whites who draw attention to such things are apartheid fellow-travelers in drag.

Indeed, so convincing did this morally unanswerable response become for every failure that the government succumbed to its own propaganda. In such circumstances there was no need for accountability. The ANC merely trots out the apartheid mantra, and tells the opposition to go stuff it.

Because Parliament is so firmly under the thumb of the ANC, government is immune from criticism from ANC MPs. There are, of course, free-spirited and open debate, and ongoing clash of personalities; some of the most policy-directed exchanges come from ANC portfolio committees whose ANC members frequently cross swords with other ANC members and express whatever opinions they want to. But there is no faulting of the ANC. Never hand ammunition to the apartheid opposition. The fact that all members of the opposition have abandoned any form of apartheid or ceased to be advocates on its behalf is irrelevant.

If ANC members find fault with government actions, they must channel their criticisms through party structures — behind closed doors. Public criticism is equated with "behavior bringing the party into disrepute" and the critic is subject to "disciplinary measures."

Although not by any measure a one-party state, South Africa is, and will remain for the foreseeable future, a one-party dominant democracy. Nor is this necessarily a bad thing during a period of transition when the government is called on to engineer fundamental and radical reform at all levels of society in order to undo the apartheid arrangements, attitudes, structures, and social/public/cultural hierarchies that permeated the country's fabric.

But whatever disillusionment blacks may feel, it never extends to Mandela himself.

He is above reproach. Even in matters that properly fall within his domain, if things don't work out the way blacks expect them to, they criticize the government, but never Mandela. Blacks make a very clear distinction between Mandela and the government. Whites do not. Indeed, it often seems they go to the opposite extreme: everything that is found wanting in government — and among whites the litany is almost endless — they put at the doorstep of Mandela.

Though he is revered abroad, whites — perhaps more accurately, older whites — have never warmed to Mandela. They may respect him, have a grudging admiration for the way in which he has destigmatized South Africa in the international arena; they may take pride, perhaps, in the acclaim with which he is received in other countries to the degree that the acclaim reflects favorably on South Africa; they may even have grown fond of him as he edges toward retirement, but there is nothing about him that would impel them to refer to him as *Madiba*, or even affectionately as the “old man.”

And for all his efforts to assuage their fears, to assure them that their remaining in South Africa is crucial to the country's future, that they too are as African as their black country brethren, they have responded to his courting with wariness. The day he querulously disparaged the increasing number of whites emigrating as not being real South Africans willing to stand their ground, as being “on the chicken run,” and echoed Thabo Mbeki's “good riddance,” they felt that he had dropped the facade, and that for once, he was revealing his true feelings — and by extension the true feelings of blacks — toward whites. Which, if one considers that their most consuming fear a few years earlier had been that once blacks “took over” they would turn on whites and treat them in the same way whites had treated blacks for decades, might be regarded as a giant leap forward.

The Mandela Legacy (1)

Mandela is the country's founding icon, the embodiment of all that is noble in the human spirit, a leader who never forgot where he came from — a prison. He gives black people a profound sense of pride, something they had never experienced; he imbues them with a dignity that allows them to rise above the often miserable conditions under which they live; he freed them from the oppression they had imposed upon themselves — the oppression of self-imposed victimhood, the excuse for refusing to empower oneself. Every nation that emerges out of the vicissitudes of historical forces, often impersonal and accompanied by conflict and carnage, needs some one person to embody what that struggle for an elusiveness called freedom was about; people need a personal embodiment of what the sacrifices were for, especially when the benefits of freedom are themselves both elusive and often illusory.

One must, therefore, make a distinction between the performance of Mandela as president of South Africa and the performance of the ANC-led government.

The Mandela Legacy (2)

Mbeki, the deputy president, must step into the shoes of a man whose shoes are too big to fill. Mbeki himself would be among the first to admit this. Greatness is an intangible: impossible to define, impossible not to recognize.

Four questions arise.

- What is the Mandela legacy?

- What is the state of the nation Mbeki will inherit?
- What state is the psyche of the country in?
- What must Mbeki do to address the manifold problems the country faces, not all of which are of its own making, and not all of which can be dealt with by the actions of a sovereign nation when globalization has curtailed freedom of unilateral action on the part of sovereign nations, and more important its efficacy; when sovereign nations, especially the smaller and less powerful ones, are, in many respects, spectators at rather than participants in the global chess game?

And finally, what context must be used to evaluate South Africa's successes or failures in the future?

This addendum is hardly the place to examine these questions in detail, but they present the broad parameters of the kinds of questions that would engage us as we get a better understanding of the kinds of travails that societies emerging into the sunlight of democracy have to put to themselves.

In the Philippines, Cory Aquino's "people's revolution" spluttered and collapsed amid the institutional corruption that characterizes much of Filipino society. The land barons tenaciously opposed agrarian reform. Aquino, under the benevolent custody of General Ramos, the army chief of staff, spent much of her time dodging coup attempts; Ramos succeeded Aquino as president, and in 1998, Joseph Erap Estrada took over from Ramos. The elections attracted little attention. The Filipinos had had their fifteen minutes on the world stage, and had the good grace to bow out gracefully. The late Ferdinand Marcos and his wife Imelda, she of the two thousand pairs of shoes, continue to fascinate the populace, and after nearly ten years it seems the \$850 million recovered from Marcos's kleptocracy will be split, with 75 percent going to the government and 25 percent to the Marcos family, who still maintain a powerful and entrenched position in Filipino society and politics. In short, little has changed, and democracy is often more honored in campaign promises to "clean up the mess," promises of "pro-poor" policies rather than in parliamentary process. But the economy, although battered by the Asian financial crisis, weathered the financial storms to a far more successful degree than many of its more highly touted neighbors, which perhaps illustrates the maxim that when you have little to lose, you are in a far better position to be resilient in the face of adversity.

Closer still to ground zero are the Mozambicans, who share the distinction with Bangladesh of being number one in terms of the World Misery Index. Yet Mozambique plods on, stoicism born of ineffable suffering. You can still buy off a customs guard with a copy of *Playboy* magazine, though one often wonders who is getting the better of the deal.

In local elections in June 1998, the two major opposition parties, RENAMO and the United Democratic Movement, called a boycott. Only 15 percent of the eligible voters cast ballots. The most notable result was the emergence of informal civil society groups that successfully contested these elections supporting independent candidates. In some parts of the country, including Maputo, they amassed over 30 percent of the vote.

FRELIMO, which has been in power for more than twenty-three years, nineteen of which were spent ruling in a one-party state, is seen by the other parties as the "ruling party" and the state, since all organs of authority at all branches of government — legislative, executive, and judicial — remain firmly within its jurisdiction.. There is little

confidence in the political system on the part of the opposition parties.

Elections for president and the National Assembly will be held in 1999. No one is holding his or her breath, least of all the opposition parties.

Elections are also due to take place in South Africa in 1999. The bad news for the ANC is that it appears to be losing support, hardly surprising given the levels of unemployment and crime and the spillover effects of the Asian crisis on the economy. The good news for the ANC is that fast as it is losing support, all opposition parties are losing support at an even more alarming rate. For the ANC it is a win-win situation. To consolidate its African base, old enemies, the ANC and the IFP, are talking a voluntary coalition with a deputy presidency or a like honor for Chief Mangosutho Buthelezi, head of the IFP and for years during the struggle the ANC's personification of collaboration with the apartheid regime. When the TRC found that Chief Buthelezi was indeed a state collaborator and behind hit squads that targeted the ANC in the 1980s and 1990s, the ANC pooh-poohed the commission's findings and went ahead with its plans for a grand alliance. De Klerk, of course, is gone, pilloried in the end by his own people for having sold them out. The National Party, now renamed the New National Party, has imploded, and the diminishing white vote has nowhere to go, except perhaps, like much else in white South Africa, to the oblivion of political irrelevance.

As we go to press, the New National Party and the Democratic Party, a party of white liberals, have gone to court, charging that the government's requirement that voters cannot vote unless they are in possession of a bar-coded ID card, which they claim millions of blacks do not possess and are thus being disenfranchised. Unless resolved, the matter could delay the elections.

There are many ways of looking at the changes taking place in the three countries under discussion. Each way will yield a different set of conclusions, because each begins from a different set of starting points.

What is perceived as a learning curve by some is labeled mismanagement by others. The constant emphasis on consultation is dismissed as indecision by some, as a necessary component of nation building by others. What is harshly condemned as corruption by some is excused as an almost obligatory sense of duty by others.

Traditions clash; values differ; notions of civil society vary; deference to authority is rejected by some and overemphasized by others.

In short, none of the countries lend themselves to easy definition. ❀

Democratic Change and Transition in Africa and the Dilemma of Nigeria

Leonard Robinson, Jr.

The 1990s witnessed profound political change throughout the continent of Africa. Tired and frustrated with one-party, autocratic, and often military rule, ordinary African citizens in country after country began to voice and demonstrate their discontent in 1990. As the former Soviet bloc countries in Eastern Europe broke ranks with the Soviet Union to claim their independence, these extraordinary events served as an added catalyst to African civil servants, market women, taxi drivers and peri-urban inhabitants to rise up against what they increasingly viewed as repressive governments and regimes, which had done little or nothing to improve their living standards and conditions. Almost ten years later, twenty-plus nations have held democratic elections at least twice; elements of civil society are evident; government has become more participatory and transparent; freedom of the press and free speech are evident everywhere; military regimes are becoming a relic of the past; and economic reforms and real growth are beginning to register a positive impact on formerly ravaged countries such as Mozambique and Uganda. There have been difficulties and setbacks in several countries, but overall, the future looks promising for the world's last frontier.

Nigeria, a complicated, complex, and troubled nation of an estimated 120 million people, where the military has ruled for all but ten years of independence, looms as Africa's most important country in political transition. With the passing of former hardline dictator General Sani Abacha and the ascendancy of his enlightened and reform minded-successor, General Abdusalami Abubakar, Nigerians, as well as the international community, are somewhat optimistic that this pivotal nation may finally participate in democratic elections to return the country to civilian rule.

The destruction of the Berlin wall and the subsequent weakening of Russia's hegemony in the Eastern bloc countries had a subtle ripple effect throughout Africa. Fueled in part by eventual declarations of independence by their satellite countries, an unthinkable phenomenon at the height of Soviet power, Africans from all walks of life also began to show signs of unrest and discontent with their long-standing autocratic

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Africa



Nigeria

forms of government. In Benin, Congo Brazzaville, Gabon, Côte d'Ivoire, São Tomé e Príncipe, Togo, and Cameroon, demonstrations broke out in protest against declining economics, scarcity of basic commodities, rising unemployment, nonpayment of salaries for government workers, and of immense importance, against one-party dictatorship and authoritarian military rule.

The faces of Africa's protestors were varied. Civil servants, taxi drivers, market women, and ordinary citizens took to the streets to vent their frustrations. Eventually, the political winds of change spread to other nations, including Mali, Niger, Zambia, and even to then President Sese Seko's Zaire.

Winds of Change

To be sure, Africans were self-motivated to press for change. Despite years of hollow, unending promises by incumbent governments to be responsive to basic human needs, persistent declining living standards and conditions of people, especially among the rural poor and urban disadvantaged, combined with restrictions on freedom, worked against old hard-line regimes. Likewise, governments were increasingly viewed as corrupt, repressive, incompetent, and disrespectful of the rule of law as well as refusing to acknowledge basic human rights.

Events unfolded so rapidly across the continent that one could legitimately characterize the process as a movement. Policymakers in the Department of State were openly, albeit guardedly, excited about what on the surface appeared to be genuine political change. During 1990–1991, two developments occurred which contributed to the acceleration of the pace and quality of political upheaval. First, at the Francophone summit at La Boule, the late prime minister of France, François Mitterrand, openly admonished the elder statesmen of the Francophone nations and cajoled them to liberalize their governments; to allow for greater transparency and accountability. More significantly, Mitterrand challenged his fellow statesmen to allow for a more open democratic political process as a way to strengthen the performance of government and, parenthetically, to stimulate the improvement of overall economic performance. In essence, Mitterrand sought and demanded political pluralism as a way to foster better, more accountable government and as a way for France to lessen its economic burden caused by annual substantial infusions of capital and other forms of assistance to Francophone governments. Second, the mighty Soviet Union and Communism, its cloak of invincibility stripped away, collapsed. The Cold War was over. Democracy had triumphed.

The United States was quick to jump on what it perceived as a democracy bandwagon rolling through the continent. No longer did the Cold War dictate America's foreign policy posture toward regimes. We openly embraced those countries undergoing progressive change with diplomatic interventions in support of democracy and with development assistance increasingly tied to a government's willingness to allow pluralism, freedom of the press, democratic elections, and economic policy reform.

A Survey of Specific Cases

In the past eight years we have witnessed some extraordinary variations and developments in the political landscape of Africa. These dynamics vary from region to region and from country to country. Liberia is lurching back toward some semblance of normalcy after a bloody and violent seven-year civil war precipitated by the invasion of a

ragtag rebel patrol that mushroomed over time into a rebel army to overthrow the military regime of Samuel Doe. The principal protagonist, Charles Taylor, emerged victorious in an internationally certified, democratic election in August 1997. Benin, one of the first African countries to experience relatively smooth, nonviolent change, has experienced two democratic elections with the former military dictator, Mathew Kerrekou, having scored an upset victory over Benin's first democratically elected incumbent, Nicephore Soglo. Next door in neighboring Togo, 1990 through 1994 marked an era of chaos and violence. Would-be candidates were attacked, some were assassinated, others disappeared. But former military dictator Gnassingbe Eyadema proved resilient. Through intimidation of the electorate and manipulation of the electoral system, he remains head of state through two so-called democratic elections. The Côte d'Ivoire also experienced violent unrest, widespread demonstrations which frequently involved clashes with the gendarmerie. Nonetheless, the venerable Houphouët Boigny prevailed until he died in 1993 of natural causes at age ninety.

In Central Africa, Gabon experienced similar street violence and the intimidation of political leaders and their party members. But President Bongo maintains his grip on power. In southern Africa, we witnessed the ouster of a founding father in Zambia with the rise of Frederick Chiluba at the expense of Kenneth Kaunda. The people of Mali in the Sahel region paid the supreme sacrifice when scores of their sons and daughters fell in the face of trigger-happy soldiers. What rose from the ashes, however, was the visionary leadership of Captain Toure, who kept his promise and moved his country through a skillful, nonviolent transition, to the election of Alpha Konare as head of state. Development in Mali today is clearly evident under the enlightened governance of President Konare. Mozambique, racked by seventeen years of brutal civil war, is on a remarkable path to economic and social recovery, registering almost 8 percent growth last year. And in a truly breathtaking development, South Africa's repressive system of apartheid is dead. Nelson Mandela, imprisoned on Robyn Island for more than twenty-seven years as the symbol of the anti-apartheid struggle, emerged a free man and enjoys messiahlike status worldwide as a statesman and as president of the Republic of South Africa.

There are presently more than twenty countries in sub-Saharan Africa in various stages of political transition, primarily in the direction of more democratic and pluralistic societies, where civil society is beginning to play a critical role in motivating and guiding government in the implementation of democratic values, standards, and practices. Governments and their leaders are increasingly being held accountable for their policies and actions. There are some notable examples of political progress and constructive economic reform and performance where rates of growth are singled out by the World Bank as exemplary. These countries include Uganda, Ghana, Benin, Botswana, and Mozambique.

Retgression

On the other side of the continuum, however, some countries have experienced setbacks, if not outright retgression, in evolving toward open democratic systems of governance. Democracy is a difficult process, often sloppy, uneven in its application, and confusing to those unfamiliar with its practice. In the early years of Africa's movement toward political change, policymakers in the U.S. Department of State were often euphoric, naively so, when an election was held successfully. They soon realized that the singular act of conducting an election was insufficient to certify the viability of any

given country's democratization process.

The Democratic Republic of Congo, formerly Zaire, is being ravaged yet again by armed violence and deadly ethnic confrontation. Barely two years have elapsed since the hated Joseph Mobutu was driven from power and subsequently died in exile. The nascent government of Laurent Kabila, the former rebel guerilla who drove Mobutu from power with the military, financial, and tactical assistance of Rwanda and Uganda, is under siege, racked with internal disarray and rebellion and the armed insurrection of hundreds of soldiers from the same neighboring countries that marched triumphantly into Kinshasa with Kabila. In central Africa the rebel army uprising has precipitated an ominous situation exacerbated by the entry of troops from Zimbabwe, Chad, and Angola in support of Kabila and by soldiers from Uganda and Rwanda in support of the rebels. Unparalleled in modern Africa history, the present state of play in central Africa, if not resolved decisively, could produce a conflagration of catastrophic proportions.

In Angola, the fragile peace accord negotiated by the United Nations in 1992 and monitored by UN peacekeeping forces has been shattered in recent months. In early December, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan stated that in Angola "there is a war." The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) leader and strongman, Dr. Jonas Savimbi, never really accepted the results of the 1992 presidential election, which, though internationally certified, confirmed President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos and his Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) government as the victorious political party. Attempts to form a government of national unity have failed repeatedly. Efforts to completely demobilize and demilitarize fighters initially registered some limited success, but in recent years UNITA has been able to rearm, clearly in preparation for return to war. Just as significant, the MPLA government has encountered continual resistance in trying to stabilize the lucrative diamond-mining operations throughout territory persistently challenged and often controlled by UNITA. The mining and marketing of diamonds, despite international trade embargoes against UNITA, has enabled them to finance their operations. Angola's twenty-three-year civil war has devastated the country and crippled a generation of young children, victims of forced military engagement, their limbs blown away by thousands of hidden, deadly land mines.

The Horn of Africa is no exception either; Eritrea and Ethiopia are locked in a raging border dispute that has caused significant casualties on both sides, including the indiscriminate bombing of schools and hospitals. Not only has this renewed conflict brought an abrupt halt to the evolution of internal constructive political change, but the resultant instability has had an adverse effect on economic development in both countries.

The Realities of Democratic Transition

These case accounts illustrate graphically the fragility of democratic political change in parts of Africa today. Indeed, democracy does not occur at the flick of a switch or as a consequence of who emerges victorious from the ballot box. It takes decades, generations, to evolve. Consider the experience of the United States as an example, which is certainly the world's longest practicing democracy, but far from being perfect in its application. Or examine the centuries it has taken for Europe to seriously consider the issue of "unity." The process of democratization is also often accompanied by violence. Witness American history, especially the Civil War and the civil rights movement.

In the case of Africa, I believe it is probable that the transition to democracy will

continue to be uneven and fraught with periods of great difficulty, perhaps even very violent upheavals.

There are a number of factors African leaders, including those representing civil society, must recognize, grapple with, and resolve in order to move forward effectively in the process of democratization.

- Generations of old-line leaders and those under their tutelage, thus exposed to their methods of governance, must depart from the political landscape.
- The concept of “winner take all” is very Western and basically anathema to the African way. Thus, politicians and political parties should be encouraged to form governments of national unity to foster cooperation in the exercise of good, effective governance for the welfare of the nation.
- Opposition leaders and members of their parties must learn the art of finesse, compromise, and give-and-take. Loyal oppositions must emerge and even consent to ministerial-level positions in governments of national unity.
- Heads of state and prime ministers, especially those selected from opposition parties, must, in a parliamentary arrangement, learn how to work together and to cooperate for the general well-being of the nation and for effective, productive government.
- Independent judiciary systems must be established, protected, and permitted to function without any outside influence.
- Senior government officials must have vision and a true commitment to the welfare of their people and for the prosperity of the nation.
- Military institutions must learn to protect and defend democracy, especially democratic principles and practices, through the application and practice of traditional military roles in a free and open society.
- The press and other media must be absolutely free, but also responsible in their monitoring role of open, accountable, and transparent government.
- Basic human rights must be respected and protected.
- The rule of law must prevail and serve to ensure citizens of due process and protection under the law.
- Civil society must expand and be effective in promoting the incorporation of democratic values, principles, and practices in governance and society in general.

The eventual incorporation of principles of democracy into the basic fabric of African societies may occur with some degree of familiarity and ease in those countries where, prior to the colonial era, there were in traditional villages and among ethnic societies elements of participation, accountability, and transparency. Ghana is a case in point where paramount chiefs presided over a council of sub-chiefs and village elders for the purpose of discussing and rendering decisions pertinent to the conduct and management of community affairs. In no instance did the paramount chief exercise absolute authority or power, nor could he, for in the practice of “their form of democracy,” all

decisions were reached by consensus. Numerous African societies conducted the affairs of the community in similar fashion before the imposition of colonial rule.

The British, French, and others, especially the Portuguese and Belgians, of course, displaced African traditional systems of governance with methods of their own; totally alien structures and practices which to this day reverberate loudly and adversely in the aftermath of post-colonial independence.

Summation

It will take time and generations for Africa to fully adapt and institutionalize democratic practices into its mainstream. It will require patience and understanding as well as assistance on the part of the West to facilitate the process, as is appropriate. It is equally important that we respect their own historical, cultural, ethnic, and territorial realities as African nations struggle with a wealth of economic, social, and political pressures and aspirations. Those who constantly refer to the continent as a “hopeless basket case,” especially the Western media, should refrain from applying Western standards and experience to the realities of extant conditions in Africa. Such skeptics should also remember the history of America and of Europe and the rocky roads they encountered and continue to experience in the pursuit of “government for and by the people.” Africa is a continent of fifty-four distinct countries. It should be examined within that context and not labeled in its entirety because of the actions and conditions in six or eight countries. Asia, Europe, and Latin America are not stigmatized by the actions, many of them horrific in nature, of several countries. Africa should be accorded the exact same treatment.

The United States should also refrain from any attempt to dictate to sovereign nations what the quality and pace of their democratization process should be. We do, however, have a moral obligation to speak out against those governments suspected of gross human rights violations. Our country is the nation with the most experience in the practice of democracy, and it is in our best interest to stand up for democracy and democratic principles in an appropriate context.

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Whither Nigeria!

The dilemma of Nigeria hangs over Africa like a huge menacing cloud of locusts. One in every four or five Africans is of Nigerian origin. With an estimated population in excess of 115 million people, it is a country whose influence and impact is felt in practically every region of the continent.

Nigeria is a country of immense quantities of natural resources. Its oil reserves are astounding. As a people, Nigerians are exceptionally energetic, intelligent, enterprising, and downright aggressive. Yet despite these positive attributes, Nigeria will and often does break one's heart. So much wasted potential; so many talented people unable to channel their gifts into productive pursuits; so much energy, dynamism, and creativity; so well endowed with precious resources. But to what end?

The country should be, could be, the Brazil of Africa, or the Korea of Africa. But in

reality and in general, Nigerians are not held in high esteem by the international community. Persistent, inept, and abusive military rule lies at the heart of the country's tainted image. The nation is also vilified because of highly visible Nigerians who traffic in narcotics throughout the world and for their blatant attempts to defraud businesses, banks, and individuals through what is referred to as "advance fee fraud" or 419 financial crimes. Corruption in government is rampant, if not endemic, and in the absence of any semblance of democracy in the past decade, the protection of basic human rights is nonexistent.

Most of Nigeria's leaders, both military and civilian, have lacked vision, commitment to and compassion for the people, and a sense of accountability and respect for the rule of law. Far more disturbing has been the apparent inability of its leaders to recognize and accept Nigeria's special role and awesome potential as a model for Africa because of the enormity of human resources as well as natural treasures. Instead, most leaders have been consumed with greed, power, and corruption.

Political change has been difficult, if not impossible, in Nigeria. A succession of military rulers have promised, ad nauseam, democratic civilian rule, only to break such promises time and time again. General Sani Abacha, who replaced General Ibrahim Babangida after the annulled presidential election in June 1993, took the country through a painful, time-consuming, and costly charade designed to formulate a new constitution. After more than two years of intense and often contentious deliberation, a draft constitution was produced, but it was never accepted by Abacha and the Provisional Ruling Council (PRC). At the beginning of 1998, Abacha and his henchmen started a campaign to strong-arm the few political parties allowed in the country to endorse him as the sole presidential candidate for elections that would have been held later in the year. But fate intervened.

June 1998 was a pivotal month in the history of Nigeria. Within a period of thirty days, the political landscape of Nigeria shifted dramatically. On June 8, Sani Abacha died of an alleged heart attack. During a meeting with U.S. undersecretary of state Tom Pickering on July 7, Mashood Abiola, the jailed and presumed winner of the 1993 presidential election, was stricken and died of cardiac arrest. The extraordinary confluence of these two events has produced yet another military officer to manage the affairs of state and of government, General Abdulsalami Abubakar. There are definitive indications, however, that he is a soldier with a difference.

To provide some contextual basis for the narrative to follow, one must digress for a moment to reflect on years of military rule in Nigeria. Since independence was gained some thirty-eight years ago, the people of this vast and ethnically complex country have experienced only twelve years of civilian rule. Given this reality, I have long held the view that Nigeria's military, so entrenched in the administration of government, cannot simply walk away from the inherent lucrative perks of power, return to the barracks, and remain there in a stable, nonthreatening posture to a civilian-led regime. Such a departure is too abrupt and bound to fail in a country where military rule has essentially become institutionalized.

Nigeria's military, therefore, must be weaned from power, enticed away from the perks and trappings of power over time, in order for any democratically elected civilian government to gain sufficient confidence that the rank-and-file sergeants, captains, and colonels will permit them to govern without interference or to overthrow them through the execution of a coup d'état.

During his 1985–1993 reign, General Ibrahim Babangida imposed a two-party sys-

tem in an attempt, among other things, to overcome Nigeria's deep tribal and ethnic cleavages. Those eligible to vote were actively encouraged to join either the Republican or Democratic party and to campaign vigorously for the candidate of their choice. Washington policymakers in the Department of State and the National Security Council were convinced, in 1990–1992, that Babangida would live up to his promise to hold elections in 1993 and to stand by the results. As history has recorded, however, it was not to be, for the military-controlled government aborted the presidential election process and declared the results of the presumptive winner, Mashood Abiola, null and void.

An analysis of the circumstances that led to this action on the part of Babangida's government, one facilitated by privileged information available to me, suggests that officers in Babangida's inner circle, including his then chief of the military and minister of defense, Sani Abacha, thwarted any move on his part to officially accept the voting results, most likely on pain of death. Babangida did not object or resist. In effect, it appears clear that Babangida's desire to live was greater than his commitment to democracy for the people of Nigeria.

With the unexpected demise of General Abacha, General Abubakar, a compromise choice for the PRC, has been elevated to head of state. Abubakar has accomplished some rather amazing things. In a statement on July 20, he officially announced an election timetable and set the official date for the return to civilian rule. The timeline has been clearly established and is being implemented as documented through the successful conduct of local government elections on December 5. Those elections were internationally certified by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and the Carter Center, which visited Nigeria from November 30 through December 8, 1998. Subsequent elections scheduled are January 9, 1999 (State Assembly and governors), February 20 (National Assembly), and February 27 for presidential elections.

Abubakar has also confounded political pundits in Africa by quietly but effectively launching an anticorruption and fraud campaign. Large sums of federal money, illegally allocated by members of Abacha's family and circle of close advisers, have been returned on demand. Abubakar has also shown understanding, diplomacy, and restraint in dealing with many of the country's nagging minority problems, especially among the Ijaws, Igonis, and Owaris. Most of Nigeria's oil is extracted in their regions, yet little if any of the official revenue derived from this resource is allocated for the benefit of their communities. The level of violence and unrest, particularly in the Owari area, caused a 20 percent reduction in oil production and refining.

More important, given Nigeria's entrenched military history of governance, it is reliably reported that General Abubakar has been to the barracks to talk to the troops and to his officers. Promises have been made and perks offered to gain their commitment to the projected handover to a democratically elected government. Increased and better pay for the rank and file and officers has been promised. Cars for officers and improved and subsidized housing have also, reportedly, been offered, as well as military training opportunities in the United Kingdom and, it is hoped, the United States. Despite these moves by Abubakar, described by many as deft and cunning, the big question remains — Is the military really listening and are they committed to returning to the barracks and transform themselves into a more traditionally functioning army designed to protect and defend the nation and its forms and systems of government and the integrity of its borders. Observers in the recent local government elections point to the emergence of the People's Democratic Party and its front-running presidential candidate, former general and head of state Olusegun Obasanjo, as a barometer of current thinking in the

barracks. His party won control of more than 50 percent of the councils in the country in the December 5 election contested by nine political parties. Officers in the military and among the rank and file reason, apparently, that if General Obasanjo wins the presidential election on February 27 as is widely predicted, he, as a former military officer, will continue to deliver the perks and allowances initiated by Abubakar. Will this dynamic ensure the success of Nigeria's return to democratic civilian rule? Only time will tell.

It is for certain that Nigeria and its allegedly interim leadership cannot be ignored. The ability to move decisively is both a function of Abubakar's own political skills and courage of conviction, but a major shift in attitude and strategy by the PRC. This latter point is all the more remarkable when one factors in the revelation that the composition of the PRC has not changed appreciably since Abacha's reign. One must reasonably conclude, then, that the PRC had become aware of Nigeria's growing worldwide reputation as a lawless, corrupt, drug-trafficking, and out-of-control state. In fact, the image of a "pariah state" was beginning to gain currency and reverberate throughout the international community. This reality, combined with growing internal unrest and palpable discontent, probably contributed to the selection of Abubakar to guide the country through its most important transition in modern history.

According to all accounts, the general is a soldier's soldier and a man of principle and vision. He is deeply committed to the objective of reinstilling a sense of military duty and pride in the military system and returning the military to its traditional role in society. He does not want to be associated with a military replete with bureaucrats. His power base and ability to command, thus far, appears to be tied to the following factors:

- Recognized expertise as a military professional
- Offer of significant allowances and benefits to officers and rank-and-file soldiers
- A 650 percent increase in wages for federal civil servants
- Election timetable adopted and being implemented
- Cautious but deliberate moves to curb corruption
- Deft moves against his detractors and enemies
- Sensitive and diplomatic management of issues surrounding ethnic minority communities
- A man of his word

Mrs. Abubakar, Nigeria's first lady, is a high court justice. There is widespread speculation that she has had a profound, positive impact on the general, especially his apparent respect for the rule of law and for an independent judicial system.

Could it be that Abubakar represents the character and quality of leadership Nigerians deserve and have been hoping for for decades? Is he a leader who can be trusted to keep his word after countless broken and dashed promises? Can Abubakar hold on to command and control long enough and effectively enough to persuade the troops to remain in the barracks and to adhere to the commitment to protect and defend the territorial integrity of the nation?

No matter what form of government is in charge of the affairs of state, its leaders will immediately be confronted by a wave of daunting economic and social problems. Though Nigeria is swimming in oil, its refineries are in ill repair and do not produce enough to supply internal requirements. The country's infrastructure, in general, has

been woefully neglected. Social problems that have precipitated unrest throughout the country require urgent attention and resolution. The general condition of Nigeria's people is declining rapidly. Political stability is essential to attacking and solving the ills of Nigeria.

In Washington's Foggy Bottom, policymakers are openly excited about what they see happening in Nigeria as a consequence of Abubakar's leadership. Many of them, including the assistant secretary of state for African affairs, Susan Rice, are optimistic about Nigeria's most recent attempt to implement a democratically elected civilian government.

I remain somewhat skeptical to guardedly optimistic. After all, I have been down this road before and am apprehensive about having my heart broken yet again. ❀



Snapshots from Jerusalem

Ellen Weiss

My two sons, eight-year-old Daniel and five-year-old Ari, stride through the Jaffa Gate into the walled Old City of Jerusalem and head down into the souk, the Arab market. They love to run through the narrow cobblestone alleyways. They move with confidence, as though they own the place. Their destination today, Farez's tea shop. I first met Farez nineteen years ago, when I spent my junior year in college at the Hebrew University. The boy who used to serve me tea is now a man. The hole-in-the-wall tea shop is now the Holy Rock Café. Farez took the family's prime real estate on the Via Dolorosa and expanded, adding indoor seating. We still prefer to sit on the small straw stools that line the street. The orange juice is freshly squeezed; the tea is served with mint and just a little sugar. A multitude of tourists pass by as they trace the route Jesus walked, carrying his cross from the place of his condemnation to the site of his crucifixion and burial. But few stop for a drink. Most tours allow for little shopping in the Muslim quarter. Business is down. Many of the storefronts are shuttered and closed, not because of a strike or an intifada but because the owners can no longer afford the city taxes.

Farez has lived all his life in Khalandia, a refugee camp near the small Jerusalem airport. He owns two horses and likes to show my boys pictures of them. Farez and his brother Khalid keep the shop sparkling clean. They rarely let us pay.

Daniel and Ari see few of their friends from school here. Many Israelis we know won't go into the Old City: they tell us it's a dangerous place. Maybe Ari and Daniel haven't been here long enough to be afraid.

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I'm sitting in Ariel Sharon's living room right above one of the busiest thoroughfares in the Muslim quarter of the Old City. It's easy to spot the foreign minister's home — a huge Israeli flag hangs down the length of the house, on the part that actually arches over the road. On the roof there's a huge menorah. There are also a half dozen Israeli soldiers stationed outside the house. Arabic music pours out of the shops below the building.

I'm here as a guest of Ateret Cohanim, a group of religious Jews that works to restore and rebuild Jewish life in the Muslim quarter of the Old City. There were Jewish residents here years ago, they explain, before British restrictions and before Jordanian rule forced them out of the Old City altogether. Since 1967, when Israel recaptured East Jerusalem, Jews in the Old City have lived primarily in the Jewish quarter. For the past decade, Ateret Cohanim has been acquiring property in this part of the city, much to the dismay of its Arab neighbors. My guide, Miriam, wearing the long sleeves, long dress,

Ellen Weiss, the executive producer of National Public Radio's All Things Considered, spent seven months of 1998 on sabbatical in Jerusalem with her husband and two young sons.

and hat of an orthodox woman, says that as a Jew there is no place she would rather be. Her home is just a short walk from the Western Wall. She says she was drawn here because it's the closest place to God.

So how did Ariel Sharon get here? According to Miriam, in the 1980s, when Ateret Cohanim started buying homes in the Muslim quarter, the group wanted some protection — soldiers to keep them safe from the Arab residents. When their requests went unanswered by the government, one-time defense minister Ariel Sharon stepped in to help. By law, former defense ministers are entitled to military protection for the rest of their lives. So when Sharon declared the Muslim quarter his primary residence, the soldiers became a permanent fixture. His living room is large and spacious, but he is nowhere to be seen.

Sharon actually lives in southern Israel, and seven Jewish families now live in his apartment complex.

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Sounds. Sometimes, Jerusalem can be a tough place to sleep. It's five o'clock in the morning and I am walking around my neighborhood. The first to pray today are the Muslims — their muezzins are calling the faithful to the first of five daily prayers.

We live on a hilltop above several Arab neighborhoods, and the sounds of the mosques rise up and fill the air. As I walk along my street, the Arabic prayers mix with those of a group of men. I hear chanting in the synagogue. It's a few weeks before the Jewish High Holidays and these men are reciting Selichot, special prayers of repentance said every morning for the month leading up to the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. From a distance I watch the group swaying and singing. It's early, but the sun is already in the sky. That's because Israel returned from daylight saving time two months before the rest of the world. The religious political bloc holds enough power over the government that it was able to "change time," ensuring that its constituents would have adequate daylight for this early prayer service. In some synagogues it's customary to blow the shofar, a ram's horn, as part of these prayers, but not at the synagogue in my neighborhood. I'm back home by 5:30, just in time to hear the church bells ringing. They are coming from the Catholic Church of the Dormition, where Christians believe Mary fell into eternal rest. I can see the church from my backyard, and I can hear the bells from my bedroom.

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The president of our synagogue begins his weekly announcements. It's the Friday night before Yom Kippur. Evening holiday services, he says, will begin at 5:15; morning services start at 9:15. If you have borrowed prayer books over the last year, he asks that you bring them back — and, on Yom Kippur this year, please, no bicycle riding in the synagogue. No one bats an eyelash. Over the next few days bike shops are open late, people working overtime, getting ready for the most sacred holiday on the Jewish calendar.

Three nights later, as the crowd pours out of the synagogue following the Kol Nidre service, Jerusalem is a changed city. The children of Israel have reclaimed the streets. Not a single car is moving. For the next twenty-four hours, bicycles, tricycles, roller

blades, and strollers own the streets. Major traffic routes have been transformed into pedestrian malls crowded with people walking leisurely. Israel is notorious for its high number of traffic accidents, but on Yom Kippur, the greatest road hazard is an out-of-control two-wheeler or skater.

The next morning, I lie in bed listening to the silence. The early morning horns and engines I am accustomed to hearing have been replaced by bird songs. The uniqueness of the day is expressed in various ways — prayer, fasting, the quiet that blankets the city — and the fact that Yom Kippur is also bicycle day in Israel.

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Salim Shawamreh, his wife, and six kids needed a place to live. The plot of land they purchased didn't look very hospitable — barren, rocky, and on a slope, not a great place to build a home. Still, Salim applied for a building permit in 1994, when peace was in the air. He was optimistic and even started to build. In 1997, the political scene had changed, and Salim's application was denied. The Israeli civil administration said that the land, the hilly, barren, rocky land, was zoned exclusively for agriculture, a designation that was made in 1942 under the British mandate. Accompanying the application was an order to demolish the unfinished home, a step routinely taken by the Israeli government to discourage illegal building. The family waited for the bulldozers to arrive. A little more than a year later they came, and in less than an hour the house was destroyed.

It's a warm, sunny afternoon, and a group of Israelis and Palestinians are gathered around the rubble of the Shawamreh home. They have come to rebuild the house. These are peace activists engaged in civil disobedience — it is illegal to rebuild a demolished home. Rabbi Arik Asherman, a leader of Rabbis for Human Rights, tells me that according to the Jewish calendar, it's two days before the ninth of Av, the day many Jews mourn the destruction of the first and second temples. He says that for this family, and other families who have had their homes demolished, the sense of loss and mourning is at least as great as what Jews feel for the temple. Too many people are trying to tear down peace; these Jews and Arabs want to build it up.

The remains of the old house are hauled out by the volunteers. A hand brigade passes bucket after bucket of rubble. The Shawamreh family serves everyone soft drinks in plastic cups. The scene is friendly and warm; conversation flows in Hebrew, Arabic, and English. Across the way, on the opposite hilltop, another group is gathering. This one arrives in jeeps and armed vehicles. The army and the civil administration have come to watch the building. In three days, after the Shawamreh house is rebuilt, they will come and knock it down again.

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It's Thursday night and Ramallah is hopping. As we turn off the dark, bumpy road that leads into town, the streets are suddenly filled with people, the traffic is bumper to bumper, and the neon lights make this place look more like Vegas than the West Bank. This is the only Palestinian-controlled city with a real night life.

There's already a crowd at Flamingos. At one table, students from Bir Zeit University; at another some staff from the UN and other international organizations; around

the bar there's a group of Israelis from Jerusalem. Tonight they are all here for jazz. The dress is casual, jeans and T-shirts for men and women. There's a pool table, everyone is smoking, and Flamingos may also be the only place in Ramallah where you can get nachos. Bassam Nasir is a jazz DJ, the only one in town. He's got two shows a week on one of the Ramallah radio stations. Like many Palestinians who lived abroad, he moved back here after this city and others were put under Palestinian control. He's hoping to do a live broadcast tonight.

The band has arrived — the journey from Tel Aviv and Jerusalem took a little longer than expected. Arnie Laurence, the sax player, heads up the five-piece ensemble made up of Israelis, Jews from abroad, and a Palestinian. A couple of young musicians studying at the conservatory in Ramallah join in. The music is great — jazz classics and some improvisation. The crowd moves with the rhythm — everyone's having a good time. Amy Mardrosian, the manager, had the dream to bring jazz to Ramallah. "With all that's going on in this country, it's nice to know that once a week you can come to some place and relax." In many places around the world, Flamingos would be just an ordinary restaurant. But here, it is the ordinary that is so extraordinary.

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Living in Jerusalem, I often make a daily calculation. Are the need and convenience greater than or less than the risk? Many factors can affect this calculation. Am I taking my kids? Has Hamas just issued a blanket threat against Israeli civilians? Has the Israeli army recently succeeded in destroying a bomb-making factory and arrested any terrorists? This helps me decide where to shop, whether or not to take the bus, and just in which direction I should drive when I leave the city.

Sometimes the equation is done on the spot. One morning I am looking for cayenne. The spice stall in Mahane Yehuda, the big open-air market in predominantly Jewish Jerusalem, is filled with wonderful aromas and brightly colored powders. Another shopper helps me — I don't know how to say cayenne in Hebrew. Suddenly her attention is drawn out of the stall into the alleyway lined with fruit and vegetable stands. She is staring at the dogs — big German shepherds walking slowly through the market. The dogs are in uniform, special forces. She explains that they are bomb sniffers. The market is filled with shoppers carrying their overstuffed bags. They are civilians, but conditioned to look out for abandoned bags, for suspicious people, for a car in the wrong place. They are always on guard because in this city, the shopper can just as easily become the bombing victim. I do the math, settle for paprika, and walk out of the market.

This morning, Israeli radio announces that gas mask distribution centers will be open to the public today. This is followed by the weather forecast. I wonder, Where do temporary visitors get gas masks? I know our apartment building has a bomb shelter — it's standard, just like a mailbox. We and the other residents use it for storage. The shelter at my son's kindergarten has been turned into a classroom. Children's artwork adorns the thick concrete walls, and there are lots of toys scattered on the floor.

The only calculation I'm making now is the distance between Israel and Iraq. ❀

Cambodia's 1998 Elections

The Failure of Democratic Consolidation

Peter M. Manikas
Eric Bjornlund

This article examines why Cambodia's transition to democracy faltered in the years that followed the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia period despite the international community's assistance to two "democratic" elections.

Cambodia's parliamentary elections on July 26, 1998, were supposed to consolidate the political gains made since 1991, when the signing of the Paris Peace Accords ended the nation's twelve-year civil war. More than five years earlier, in May 1993, elections organized by the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) — held at a cost of \$1.5 billion and the lives of seventy-eight people deployed to Cambodia under UNTAC auspices¹ — ushered in a coalition government that had been expected to establish a legal and political framework for the democratic governance of the country. While the election was largely hailed as a success at the time, that coalition unraveled over the next five years. By July 1997, a violent coup had overturned the elected government and the nation once again confronted civil violence and international isolation.

The 1998 elections, like the UN-supervised elections five years earlier, failed to mend Cambodia's deep-seated political divisions. Indeed, the nation now looks much as it did when it emerged from the UNTAC period. The Cambodian People's Party (CPP), with roots in Vietnamese communism, is in control of the civil bureaucracy, security forces, and electronic media; key opposition leaders returned from exile only recently and are participating in a fragile coalition government. The human rights of political activists are far from secure.

The Paris Peace Agreements and the 1993 Elections

Perhaps no country in the twentieth century has suffered more turmoil and unremitting violence than Cambodia. The nation has seen little peace, and no stability, during the past fifty years. Since the end of the Second World War, each of Cambodia's governments has been an abrupt departure from the one that preceded it: in 1953 the French

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colonial regime was replaced by the monarchy of King Norodom Sihanouk; the king was overthrown by his prime minister, Lon Nol, in 1970; the Lon Nol regime was toppled by the Khmer Rouge in 1975; the Maoist Khmer Rouge, led by Pol Pot, were conquered by the invading Vietnamese army in 1978; and in 1991, the Vietnamese-installed regime, after fighting a protracted civil war against the Khmer Rouge as well as against the royalist and nationalist forces encamped along the Thai border, was replaced by the United Nations-sponsored transitional government.

The Vietnamese invasion of December 1978 installed the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK), which faced a continuing struggle against the Khmer Rouge. The PRK, which consisted mostly of former Khmer Rouge cadre who had defected to Vietnam to escape the purges launched by Pol Pot shortly after taking power, was led by Heng Samrin and, after 1985, by Hun Sen. Defeated in battle, the Pol Pot-led guerrillas had fled into hiding along the Thai-Cambodia frontier. In 1982, the Khmer Rouge entered into an alliance with the royalist National Front for an independent, neutral, peaceful, and cooperative Cambodia (known by its French acronym, FUNCINPEC), headed by King Sihanouk, and later by his son, Prince Ranariddh. A third alliance member, the republican Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF), was led by Son Sann, a highly respected former prime minister in Sihanouk's 1960s government. Each of the warring factions secured the backing of its Cold War patrons: the USSR supporting its ally Vietnam, and therefore the PRK; China backing the Khmer Rouge; and the Western countries, as well as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, assisting FUNCINPEC and the KPNLF.

The Cold War, still raging in the early and mid-1980s, stymied occasional attempts to bring an end to the conflict. The thaw of the late 1980s, however, finally led to a breakthrough. The Vietnamese withdrew their forces in 1989, and the PRK changed its name to the State of Cambodia (SOC), preparing for its new non-Communist image. That same year, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, along with other interested parties, initiated the Paris Peace Conference on Cambodia.

The 1991 Paris Peace Agreement obligated the United States, Japan, China, and the other signatories of the 1991 Paris Accords to support the struggle for democracy in Cambodia. These agreements required Cambodia to respect human rights as enshrined in the principal international instruments on human rights. The Paris Accords called for Cambodia to follow "a system of liberal democracy on the basis of pluralism." The accords also mandated "periodic and genuine elections . . . with a requirement that electoral procedures provide a full and fair opportunity to organize and participate in the electoral process."²

The agreement established the largest and most costly peacekeeping force in the history of the United Nations: the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia. UNTAC was to supervise the administration of the country until a democratically elected Constituent Assembly formed a new government and ratified a national constitution. With a budget of more than \$2 billion (of which \$1.5 billion was actually spent),³ UNTAC consisted of more than 20,000 foreign personnel, including 15,000 people serving in its military component.

UNTAC's mandate was a broad one. It was given "all powers necessary to ensure implementation" of the comprehensive agreement. In the military area, UNTAC's specific task was to "supervise, monitor, and verify" the cease-fire, the withdrawal of foreign troops, and the cantonment and disarmament of the four warring factions: the SOC, the Khmer Rouge, FUNCINPEC, and the KPNLF.⁴

UNTAC's civil responsibilities, too, were extensive. They included supervising the repatriation of refugees, conducting elections, and implementing programs to protect human rights. UNTAC was also responsible for exercising direct control over administrative bodies in the areas of foreign affairs, national defense, public security, finance, and public information. Additionally, it was to "supervise or control" other, less sensitive public activities. Its fundamental objective, though, was to "ensure a neutral political environment conducive to free and fair elections."

During the May 23–28, 1993, elections, nearly 4 million Cambodians, almost 90 percent of all registered voters, went to the polls. Representatives were elected on a proportional basis, with each of the nation's twenty-one provinces serving as an election district. The UN established 1,400 stationary and mobile polling stations, and personnel from more than forty countries supervised the voting. UNTAC, working with national nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), conducted an extensive civic education campaign to assure citizens that their vote would be secret. To protect the secrecy of the ballot at the village level, counting was conducted at provincial centers where ballots from several villages were commingled to obscure voting patterns in any given locality.

Expectations that the Khmer Rouge would interrupt the voting did not materialize. Intimidation and violence, however, did mar the campaign. The CPP was accused of intimidating candidates and voters, denying opposition parties fair media access, and other forms of harassment. Several opposition activists, primarily FUNCINPEC supporters, were murdered during the campaign. Most of the political violence was attributed to the Khmer Rouge, but a substantial portion of the violence also was found to be the responsibility of the CPP.⁵

To some extent, the violence that flared was the responsibility of all the major contesting parties. FUNCINPEC candidates, for example, also appealed to people's prejudices against the resident Vietnamese population, many of whom had been in the country for generations. As a result, the Vietnamese community was also the target of political violence.

Although twenty parties registered, only four of them won seats in the Constituent Assembly. Of the 120 seats in the assembly, FUNCINPEC obtained 58 (45.5 percent of the total vote); the Cambodian People's Party 51 (38.2 percent); and the Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party (BLDP), the civilian arm of the KPNLF, won 10 (3.7 percent). A much smaller party, Molinaka, won one seat.

The euphoria that accompanied the election, however, soon subsided. His unexpected loss led Hun Sen to reject the results, claiming that the UN had rigged the election against him. Rumors of a possible coup appeared even as the ballots were being counted, and CPP leaders threatened secession in eight eastern provinces bordering on Vietnam. The pending crisis was averted only when King Sihanouk brokered a power-sharing agreement.

A coalition government was formed which, if it did not reflect the election's outcome, at least mirrored the realities of political power. After the election, the CPP remained in control of the civil bureaucracy, police, and other key components of the state apparatus. Therefore, FUNCINPEC needed the CPP's cooperation in order to govern effectively. In addition, Cambodia's Constitution required that the new government be approved by two-thirds of the National Assembly. Clearly, a compromise would be needed to form the government. Consequently, the CPP and FUNCINPEC agreed to share the top government positions. Although FUNCINPEC won a plurality of the parliamentary seats, each of the eighteen government ministries would be headed by

co-ministers, one from each party, or by a minister and a secretary of state from different parties. The government that emerged was quickly termed a government of national reconciliation. At the time, the new government was seen as the product of a successful international intervention.

National reconciliation was needed because long-standing animosities continued to divide the country. Many still viewed the CPP as a “puppet” of the Vietnamese and therefore a threat to Khmer culture. The National Front FUNCINPEC, on the other hand, suffered under several handicaps despite the nation’s respect for the king, and by extension for Prince Ranariddh. Many of the party’s members of Parliament (MPs) were seen as venal opportunists. Resentment lingered because several FUNCINPEC officials were allowed to retain their foreign passports, usually issued by the United States or France, which they obtained during their years in exile. In the minds of many Cambodians, these links with foreign countries cast doubt on the MPs’ commitment to improving the lives of ordinary Cambodians.

As the new government assumed office, UNTAC’s legacy was becoming increasingly clear. The civil war had ended, the Khmer Rouge was politically marginalized, and 375,000 refugees had returned. With the high rate of registration and voter turnout, the election was technically a success. Furthermore, UNTAC had sponsored dozens of new nongovernmental organizations engaged in monitoring human rights, civic education, and social services. In addition, several newspapers were operating free of direct government control.

UNTAC, however, failed to accomplish several important tasks. During the election, in provinces such as Battambang, Siem Reap, and Kompong Thom, UNTAC had been unable to prevent considerable harassment and violence. This included the arrest and intimidation of party activists, the bombing of party offices, and the execution of opposition supporters, a pattern that was to repeat itself five years later. Also, the military forces of the opposing sides had been neither demobilized nor disarmed. While the forces of the former warring factions were incorporated into an army under unified command, troops, in fact, remained loyal to their former political leaders, and divisions were widely known to be aligned with either FUNCINPEC or the CPP.

UNTAC also failed to fulfill its principal mandate to “ensure a neutral political environment.” Throughout the campaign period, and after the election as well, the CPP maintained firm control of the civil bureaucracy, judiciary, police, and much of the military. These instruments of state power were used by the CPP during the election period to retain its hold on government.

The Coalition Unravels

Cambodia made some progress in the early part of its experiment with democracy. The newly seated Constituent Assembly, for instance, transformed itself into a legislative chamber, adopted a new Constitution, and passed much-needed laws spurring foreign investment. The government made improvements in the country’s infrastructure and advances in the areas of education and health care. There were also significant developments in Cambodian civil society, marked by the growth of independent media and the emergence of strong and nongovernmental organizations. A number of these NGOs actively sought to strengthen human rights, improve the legal system, enhance the status of women, and educate the public about democracy.

After the UNTAC period, however, turmoil within the parties clouded the political

landscape. A power struggle within the Cambodian People's Party, for example, was reportedly behind an attempted coup d'état in July 1994. In 1995, the Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party splintered. Hun Sen's CPP backed a new faction of BLDP led by information minister Ieng Mouly.

By 1995, problems had emerged within FUNCINPEC, weakening the party as a coalition partner. Sam Rainsy, for example, who served as finance minister, was widely regarded as one of FUNCINPEC's most capable members. An outspoken critic of the widespread corruption that infected all levels of government, Rainsy was removed from his post and expelled from the party. He later established the Khmer Nation Party (KNP), subsequently renamed the Sam Rainsy Party, an effective competitor in the 1998 elections. Following Sam Rainsy's ouster, Prince Sirivudh, the king's half brother and FUNCINPEC secretary-general, was forced out of the party and pushed into exile in France, accused of plotting to assassinate Hun Sen. With the departure of Rainsy and Sirivudh, two of the party's most competent political operatives were unavailable to help the increasingly beleaguered and outmaneuvered Prince Ranariddh.

During this time, the fragile coalition began to unravel. Animosity between the co-prime ministers led to political stalemate, which prevented the government from undertaking the political and social reforms needed to establish its legitimacy. Independent judicial institutions required by the Constitution — the Constitutional Council and Supreme Council of the Magistracy — were never established. The CPP retained full control of the judiciary, local administration, and the security forces. Endemic corruption persisted as well.

Likewise, newspapers critical of the CPP or the government were closed and their editors imprisoned. Between 1993 and 1997, several journalists were prosecuted, killed, or injured, apparently the result of politically motivated attacks. In addition, opposition political party workers were threatened and harassed.

In March 1997, an apparent assassination attempt on Sam Rainsy at a public rally in front of the National Assembly in Phnom Penh killed at least sixteen people and injured more than one hundred. The attack, widely attributed to Hun Sen's bodyguard detail, was a turning point. To many observers, the political impasse now seemed increasingly likely to be resolved by violence.

The following month, Hun Sen made an attempt to divide the opposition internally by encouraging FUNCINPEC MPs to defect to the CPP. The CPP reportedly used intimidation and bribes to recruit the dozen defectors, but it was not long before most returned to the National Front FUNCINPEC. Nevertheless, the CPP had managed to increase its numbers in Parliament and now had an effective majority. It still fell short, however, of the two-thirds majority necessary to adopt constitutional amendments.⁶

The upcoming 1998 elections were also generating increased tensions. Realizing that FUNCINPEC had little influence over local administration, and that control over local offices in the countryside would be important in the parliamentary elections, Ranariddh sought a new district-level power-sharing agreement. The parties failed to reach an accord, each blaming the other for bargaining in bad faith.

Although required by the Paris Peace Accords, the parties never merged their military forces into a single national army and maintained large armed militias and "body-guard units." Both the CPP and FUNCINPEC competed to recruit defecting Khmer Rouge soldiers to their sides. Independent judicial institutions mandated by the Constitution were not established. Even before the July 1997 coup, many Cambodian citizens questioned their government's commitment to democracy, had lost faith in the

democratic process, and doubted the possibility of meaningful elections. Despite these trends, however, until July 1997 the principles of a multiparty government stood.

July 1997 Coup and Aftermath

On July 5, 1997, second prime minister Hun Sen launched a coup d'état against Cambodia's first prime minister, Prince Ranariddh, overturning the lawful government. For two days forces loyal to Hun Sen routed troops loyal to Prince Ranariddh. After the coup, Hun Sen quickly consolidated his power by disarming and detaining nearly all military, police, and intelligence forces loyal to the prince and dismantling the political infrastructures of parties opposed to the CPP throughout the country. In the days following the coup, dozens of Ranariddh's key supporters and other FUNCINPEC loyalists were killed, including senior interior ministry official Ho Sok, who was executed on the grounds of the ministry. Offices of parties opposed to the CPP were sacked and burned. Meanwhile, Prince Ranariddh fled to France, while many of his party's stalwarts found exile in Bangkok.

In August, Hun Sen consolidated his control when the National Assembly formally deposed the prince as co-prime minister, stripped him of his parliamentary immunity, and named Hun Sen's ally, foreign minister Ung Huot, as the new first prime minister. A military court subsequently charged Ranariddh with smuggling arms and colluding with the outlawed Khmer Rouge guerrilla group.

For months after the coup, fighting between forces of the Cambodian People's Party government and troops loyal to Prince Ranariddh continued along the northwestern border between Cambodia and Thailand. An estimated 60,000 Cambodians fled to refugee camps in Thailand.

Prince Ranariddh and other exiled political leaders formed the Union of Cambodian Democrats (UCD). FUNCINPEC joined the alliance with three other political parties opposed to the current government: the Khmer Nation Party of Sam Rainsy, the BLDP led by Son Sann, and the Khmer Neutral Party, a small party that had no seats in Parliament.

In retrospect, the July coup should not have been too surprising. Other coup attempts had been made between 1993 and 1997. In addition, the previous year had seen the rivalry between Hun Sen and Ranariddh grow increasingly intense and militant. Beginning in August 1996, the two co-prime ministers competed fiercely for the allegiance of the Khmer Rouge defectors. The first to desert was Ieng Sary, Pol Pot's brother-in-law, who was largely regarded as being very near the top of the Khmer Rouge hierarchy. Hun Sen prevailed, offering Ieng Sary and his followers a royal pardon and effective control of Pailin. However, the defections of other Khmer Rouge leaders continued, as did the competition for their support. Hun Sen and Ranariddh dispatched emissaries to lure defectors to their respective sides. To the co-prime ministers, the dissidents potentially offered disciplined and experienced guerilla fighters and perhaps whatever funds from illegal gem and timber operations had been stashed in Swiss bank accounts.⁷ In November 1996 and February 1997, FUNCINPEC and CPP military units in Battambang clashed. Although the skirmishes were brief, they served as a reminder, if one was needed, that the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces was not truly a national army.

International Response

The international response to Hun Sen's coup lacked coherence. The United States

suspended all but the humanitarian assistance portion of its \$38 million foreign assistance program. Germany followed suit, and Japan, Cambodia's largest donor, suspended aid but quickly resumed it. France continued to provide aid to Cambodia but also stated that credible elections in 1998 were critical. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, citing government corruption and Cambodia's failure to comply with a structural adjustment program, rather than referring to the coup, suspended aid and a \$120 million IMF loan package.⁸

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) condemned the coup and postponed Cambodia's pending membership until after elections. ASEAN — together with an informal diplomatic grouping known as the Friends of Cambodia, which included Australia, China, France, India, Russia, and the United States — urged Hun Sen and the exiled political leaders to come to an agreement on the conditions under which the exiles would return to Cambodia so that the national elections scheduled for 1998 could be “free, fair, and credible.”⁹

In September 1997, the United Nations accreditation committee decided that Cambodia's seat in the General Assembly should remain vacant. By leaving it empty, the UN withheld its recognition of the new government in Phnom Penh, a significant victory for the leaders in exile. The United Nations also played an important role in attempting to arrange for the return of the exiled political leaders by securing from Hun Sen guarantees for their safety and freedom. The UN provided international monitors to help protect returning political leaders.

The UCD in exile received support from the international community, including the U.S.-based National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI).¹⁰ This assistance was designed to enable the UCD to stay together long enough to develop a strategy for negotiating its return. Under pressure from the international community, the Hun Sen regime agreed to several of the opposition's demands; if the exiles returned there would be guarantees for their safety, international assistance for new elections, and UN monitors to help ensure the election's fairness.

New elections were eventually scheduled for July 1998. Coaxed back from exile by the international donors in the aftermath of the coup, the opposition agreed to participate in an election in which the playing field was far from level. UN human rights monitors, for example, continued to document numerous instances of violence and intimidation directed against opposition supporters in Cambodia's rural countryside.¹¹ Khmer Nation Party leader Sam Rainsy returned to the country briefly in late November. Leaders and supporters of FUNCINPEC, the BLDP, and the KNP returned in January and February.

Hun Sen threatened Prince Ranariddh with prosecution for smuggling weapons and colluding with the outlawed Khmer Rouge. If convicted, he would have been ineligible to stand for election. Under the terms of a Japanese-brokered agreement, however, the prince was tried in absentia, received a royal pardon, and returned to Cambodia in late March.

In the months before the elections, Sam Rainsy and Prince Ranariddh threatened on several occasions to pull their parties out of the election unless several conditions were met, including a cease-fire in the ongoing fighting in the northwest, fair access to broadcast media, dismantling of pro-government militia in the provinces, reestablishing the National Election Commission (NEC), and convening the Constitutional Council. Nevertheless, even though their demands were never met, they stayed in the race.

The 1998 Elections: A Flawed Climate and Framework

On July 26, 1998, Hun Sen's CPP prevailed at the polls by winning an absolute majority of the parliamentary seats, with some 42 percent of the ballots cast. Together, the two major opposition parties, the National Front FUNCINPEC and the Sam Rainsy Party, received 45 percent (31 percent and 14 percent, respectively). This translated into 64 seats for the CPP, 43 for FUNCINPEC, and 15 for the Sam Rainsy Party. International and domestic election observers praised the process as it unfolded on election day. Nevertheless, the opposition rejected the electoral results, claiming that fraud and "serious irregularities" robbed them of their victory.

Viewed in its entirety, the election process in Cambodia fell far short of democratic norms.¹² As agreed by virtually all international and domestic observers, the voting process itself was generally well administered and the atmosphere on election day was largely peaceful. In the face of serious obstacles, the Cambodian people turned out in high numbers on election day. But while balloting and initial stages of the vote count went relatively well, both the political climate and the institutional framework for the elections were highly flawed.

Political Environment in Pre-election Period

In the months leading up to the 1998 elections, violence and intimidation plagued Cambodia. After the July 1997 coup, dozens of opposition members of Parliament and party leaders fled the country in fear for their lives. Cambodian political parties, election monitoring groups, human rights organizations, and the UN Center for Human Rights documented the systematic and widespread political intimidation and violence that plagued the pre-election environment. The UN documented dozens of politically motivated summary executions, and "disappearances," following the July 1997 coup.¹³ The UN special representative for human rights submitted reports to the Cambodian government, but no action was taken by Cambodian officials to apprehend those responsible for human rights violations.

In the aftermath of the coup, second prime minister Hun Sen and the CPP dismantled the infrastructures of opposition political parties. During the months that the opposition was in exile, Hun Sen and the CPP were able to campaign without competition. When opposition leaders were later allowed to return to Cambodia in the months before the 1998 election, they had to operate within a framework designed and dominated by the CPP. Opposition parties were not given sufficient time to rebuild their party membership networks, and CPP resources dwarfed those of the opposition. Prince Ranariddh attracted large crowds when he campaigned in provincial capitals, but reports of political violence directed against opposition party workers in the rural countryside persisted.

After the July 1997 coup, the CPP took advantage of the opposition's absence to further consolidate its control over the military, security forces, civil administration, and media. The media limited their coverage of opposition candidates throughout the campaign period. News coverage of rallies, speeches, and other campaign events was heavily biased toward the ruling party. Moreover, limited access to broadcast media impeded the ability of opposition parties to reach potential voters and gave the CPP a substantial advantage. Each of the thirty-nine registered political parties was allowed one five-minute slot per day. This diluted the media access of the two major opposition parties, FUNCINPEC and the Sam Rainsy Party, which received no more time than the parties that had no prior history and little demonstrable public support.

Institutional Framework

The legal and institutional framework lacked the credibility necessary for democratic elections. The process of enacting the election law and regulations and of establishing the National Election Commission and Constitutional Council effectively ensured ruling party control of election administration and dispute resolution. Those institutions had little credibility with much of the public and the international community when they addressed the election disputes that later arose.

Furthermore, the opposition had no opportunity to participate in the development of the election law or the appointment of the bodies to oversee the elections and resolve disputes. While opposition members of Parliament and other political leaders were still in exile, the Cambodian People's Party controlled the National Assembly and enacted the election law and appointed the NEC members.

The way in which the members of the National Election Commission were selected raised serious questions about its independence and ultimately its credibility. Under the new election law, the eleven-member NEC was to include representatives from each of the parties represented in the National Assembly and from the NGO sector. But party seats were given to ruling party-backed factions of opposition parties. In addition, NGO leaders questioned the impartiality of the NGO representative.

The Constitutional Council, which was supposed to function as the final arbiter of constitutional and election-related disputes, was not properly constituted. CPP-appointed members controlled the Constitutional Council, and the council failed to meet in the pre-election period to address serious and fundamental election-related disputes.

As previously noted, the Cambodian Constitution requires the support of two-thirds of the members of Parliament to form a government. Thus, the party receiving a plurality or even a majority had to obtain the support of one or more of the other parties. The CPP, then, had to form a government with FUNCINPEC or the Sam Rainsy Party, and Ranariddh was asked by Hun Sen to participate in the new government. The prince refused for several months, precipitating a constitutional crisis.

The combined opposition received substantially more votes than the CPP. If FUNCINPEC and the Sam Rainsy Party had merged before the elections they would have garnered a plurality and had the right to designate the new prime minister. Moreover, because the new government needed a two-thirds vote of confidence from the recently elected National Assembly members, the opposition had the power to deny the CPP the ability to form a government in accordance with the Constitution. Neither event occurred. The opposition, effectively unable to collaborate on a strategy, seemingly was politically paralyzed.

Problems in the Post-Election Period

After the elections, the National Front FUNCINPEC and the Sam Rainsy Party submitted approximately 800 formal complaints to the NEC. They alleged, among other things, problems with the vote count, including the fact that many party agents were intimidated and denied access to the count. In response, the NEC, between July 30 and August 4, conducted a recount in eight of the country's fifteen hundred communes. On August 5 an NEC spokesperson claimed that the alleged problems were not substantiated and announced that the commission was ceasing all operations. The NEC also refused to provide official rejection notices to the complainants. This, in turn, jeopardized the parties' ability to take some complaints to the Constitutional Council.

The Constitutional Council refused to accept complaints about intimidation of opposition party agents, alleged electoral fraud, and the formula by which seats were allocated. It stated that these complaints were either formally rejected by the NEC or not filed before the deadline. The council's refusal to consider these complaints, coupled with the NEC's failure to provide the required rejection notices, foreclosed any meaningful opportunity for appeal.

On the day following the election, a controversy involving the formula for allocating National Assembly seats erupted. Versions of the electoral regulations published on May 6 and May 25 clearly indicated that one particular formula would be used. These regulations were not marked as drafts and were widely circulated to party representatives. After a meeting of the NEC on May 29, another version of the regulations, carrying that date, was circulated in early June. It subsequently became clear from NEC records and from the accounts of individual commissioners that the NEC neither discussed nor properly adopted a new formula, but the new regulations included the change. No particular effort, such as a letter to parties or a press statement, was made to highlight this significant alteration, and evidently no one from the opposition parties, domestic monitoring groups, international observer organizations, and the diplomatic community was aware that a change had been made. The new formula gave the CPP five additional seats, compared with what the ruling party would have received under the previous formula. This was sufficient to provide the CPP with a majority, 64 seats in the new 122-seat National Assembly.

There was evidence that NEC advisers, in adopting the new formula, were merely trying to correct what they believed to be a technical mistake. The opposition's other allegations of fraud in the balloting and counting did not appear to be significant enough in their totality to have affected the overall outcome of the election. But since the NEC and the Constitutional Council were seen as lacking independence, their responses to the opposition's complaints were viewed with suspicion by the press, Cambodian NGOs, the Cambodian public, and the international community.

Violence and Intimidation after the Elections

Instability and violence resumed after the elections. Grenade attacks on Hun Sen's compound, the violent suppression of street demonstrations, and the killing and disappearance of opposition figures formed the backdrop to the pending negotiations on the formation of the government. Chaos threatened to take hold as ruling and opposition party leaders jockeyed for position in advance of discussions about whether, and on what terms, FUNCINPEC would join the government.

On September 8, the government issued the first of two orders that prohibited about 300 people, including all the new opposition members of Parliament, all outgoing opposition MPs, and several FUNCINPEC senior civil servants, from leaving the country. The ban was justified as a means of keeping suspects allegedly involved in grenade attacks and demonstrations in the country. The UN Human Rights Center condemned this travel ban as a violation of the Cambodian Constitution, the fundamental right to freedom of travel, and an express commitment of the Cambodian government to the UN secretary-general.

The post-election chaos, initiated by demands for an investigation of election-related complaints, might well have been avoided if there had been credible and functioning institutions to administer the grievance process. But the institutions charged with responsibility to resolve disputes largely failed to effectively address the opposition's concerns.

Domestic and International Observers

Domestic and international election observer groups performed an important role during the election period. Their judgment on the election would be influential in determining whether the elections would be considered legitimate by the international community, thereby allowing foreign aid to resume, permitting the vacant UN General Assembly seat to be filled, and reopening membership in ASEAN. Three national election monitoring groups — the Coalition on Free and Fair Elections (COFFEL), the Committee on Free and Fair Elections (COMFREL), and the Neutral and Impartial Committee for Free Elections (NICFEC) — carried out ambitious and effective programs to educate voters and to monitor the balloting and counting processes. Local groups were essential in monitoring and reporting on the pre-election violence, intimidation, and institutional proceedings. Domestic monitors were present at most of the nation's 12,000 polling stations and fewer counting stations throughout the country. COFFEL, COMFREL, and NICFEC issued thoughtful and balanced statements before and after election day.

COMFREL's president, Thun Saray, stated two days before polling that, because of the intimidation and violence that took place in the aftermath of the coup, the election could not be considered "free and fair." Nevertheless, he believed that the election results should be accepted if procedures on polling day were "reasonably credible." The domestic observers agreed that polling and counting days were generally well conducted. All three groups, however, also called on the NEC to conduct thorough, impartial investigations into opposition party complaints and, in fact, offered to assist the NEC with such efforts. They condemned the post-election violence and called on all political actors to solve their differences peacefully.¹⁴

The most prominent international monitoring groups were the Joint International Observer Group (JIOG), organized by the UN and European Union (EU), and the delegation fielded jointly by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and the International Republican Institute. JIOG was the larger of the two, consisting of approximately five hundred observers representing thirty-four observer missions, including the EU, ASEAN, and bilateral delegations. NDI and IRI established a monitoring presence in the country four months before the election and fielded a delegation for election week of about sixty representatives, including staff members, from the United States and seven other nations.

Although Cambodian press accounts emphasized perceived differences between the two groups of observers, their final statements on the election were not far apart, nor did they differ substantially from the statements made by domestic observers.¹⁵ Both groups noted that the pre-election period was violent; but JIOG concluded that "what could be observed by us on polling and counting day was a process that was free and fair to an extent that it enables it to reflect, in a credible way, the will of the Cambodian people."¹⁶ An NDI-IRI pre-election delegation issued a statement on July 14 calling the election process "fundamentally flawed" due to pervasive intimidation and violence.

The "preliminary" NDI-IRI post-election statement, issued on July 28, two days after the polling, commented that the voting process was "generally well administered," observed that the atmosphere on election day was largely "peaceful," and applauded the Cambodian people for turning out in such high numbers on election day. At the same time, NDI and IRI reiterated their serious concerns regarding "violence, extensive intimidation, unfair media access, and ruling party control of the administrative

machinery that characterized the pre-election period” and cautioned that a final assessment of the entire election process would have to await the final tabulation of results, the processing of complaints, and the formation of the next government based on the results of the elections.¹⁷

To some extent, the observer groups raised more question than they resolved. How could it be determined, for example, whether the July 1997 coup and its violent aftermath affected voting behavior? Should any elections that do not meet international standards, because of pre-election violence, for instance, be considered unacceptable by the international community? Political reality in large measure probably accounts for the international monitors’ view of their role. An election was about to be held under conditions that were obviously flawed. But the opposition had agreed to participate, albeit under international pressure.

The reaction of the U.S. government to the elections was cautious. U.S. secretary of state Madeline Albright urged ASEAN to keep pressuring the Cambodian government for further reforms. She said, “The democratic process must continue until the day comes when Cambodians can participate in the life of their country without fear . . . until they have a government that uses power to uplift their . . . country instead of abusing it on behalf of a privileged few.”¹⁸

Negotiations for a Coalition Government

Much of the international community pressured Prince Ranariddh to return to negotiate the National Front FUNCINPEC’s participation in the Cambodian government. On November 12, at the insistence of King Sihanouk, Ranariddh returned to Phnom Penh to try to resolve the impasse that had prevented the formation of a government based on the results of the July elections. FUNCINPEC and the Cambodian People’s Party quickly agreed to form a coalition government and to establish a new upper house of Parliament and senate. Ranariddh would become president of the National Assembly, and CPP stalwart Chea Sim would become head of the new senate, which would also make him head of state in the absence of the king. The parties agreed on co-deputy prime ministers, one from CPP and one from FUNCINPEC, and dividing government ministries. The important ministries of interior and defense would also have co-ministers. The parties also split the nine parliamentary committees, four each for FUNCINPEC and CPP and one for the Sam Rainsy Party.

In light of the agreement to form a government, Cambodia was expected to reclaim its seat at the UN and to be admitted to ASEAN.

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Cambodia’s coalition government, put into place following the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia—conducted elections of 1993, failed the test of time. Despite massive aid from the international community — \$1.5 billion for UNTAC and pledges of \$1.3 billion in post-election assistance over the next five years — the democratic impetus the elections provided could not be sustained. The elections succeeded in marginalizing the Khmer Rouge, but the animosity between the coalition partners of the new government persisted. Immediately following the 1993 elections, neither of the coalition partners could rule alone. FUNCINPEC lacked the critical sup-

port of the civil bureaucracy, police, courts, and much of the military, which remained under CPP control. The CPP, on the other hand, lacked international legitimacy and, having received only 38 percent of the total vote, also lacked a substantial segment of domestic public support.

Initially, this mutual reliance was sufficient to hold the coalition intact. The institutions that could have supported the new democratic dispensation, however, failed to take root. The National Assembly, for instance, never developed the capacity to act as an independent check on the executive branch; the press, on the whole, remained highly partisan, and opposition newspapers were subject to harassment and intimidation; civil society made substantial gains, but had neither sufficient time nor resources to develop and mobilize domestic political constituencies for reform. Moreover, Hun Sen correctly sensed that the international community, already fatigued by years of assistance — first to the refugees who fled after the Vietnamese invasion and then to the new government — longed for stability rather than democracy. Lacking international and domestic constraints, the looming prospect of defeat at the polls led Hun Sen to violently overthrow his coalition partner.

The 1998 elections merely affirmed the post-coup status quo. Despite the obstacles that had been put in their path, the opposition had mounted a vigorous campaign and made a respectable showing. It is impossible to know how much better the political opposition might have done had the playing field been level. The pre-election period was short and violent, though perhaps less violent than during the 1993 UNTAC elections. But unlike the 1993 elections, there were no UN peacekeepers to inform voters that their ballots were secret and their safety assured. In the post-coup environment, the scales were heavily weighted in favor of the CPP, and the elections were therefore fundamentally flawed regardless of how well the polls were administered on election day.

In retrospect, there are a few lessons that might be drawn from the Cambodian tragedy. First, the UNTAC period — the eighteen months between March 1992 and September 1993 — was too short to establish the framework for a lasting democracy. After thirty years of civil war, the trauma of Khmer Rouge rule, and Vietnamese occupation, a more sustained effort was needed. The 1993 elections left the power relationships between the major parties unchanged despite the CPP's electoral defeat. UNTAC failed to demobilize the military forces of FUNCINPEC and the CPP and did not establish a "neutral political environment" before the election. After the election, efforts to neutralize and professionalize the civil bureaucracy, courts, and police might have helped to redress the imbalance, but such efforts were precluded by UNTAC's premature departure. UNTAC, with its wide-ranging mandate and relative acceptability by all the parties, was in the best position to undertake these post-election activities.

Second, when, by the spring of 1997, it was clear that a political impasse existed and the situation was deteriorating rapidly, the international community should have taken firmer steps — by threatening sanctions or aid cutoffs or even by reconvening the Paris Peace conference — to ensure that the Paris Peace Accords were observed. The international donors, however, appeared to believe that placing pressure on Hun Sen would be inherently destabilizing. In the context of Cambodia's highly polarized society, however, the opposite was true. Only a more democratic Cambodia, where each of the parties felt that they could fairly and peacefully compete for power, could lead to a measure of stability. It was only after the grenade attack on Sam Rainsy's demonstration in April 1997 that the international community became more assertive in its calls for reform, and by then it was too late.

Third, the 1998 elections should have been delayed until the conditions for meaningful democratic elections had been met. The political opposition had neither the time nor organizational resources to compete fairly in the 1998 elections. As mentioned earlier, they were forced to contest the election before being able to repair the damage done to their organizations by the 1997 coup. Furthermore, their workers were harassed and intimidated and access to government-controlled electronic media was severely restricted.

Elections have not brought democracy or stability to Cambodia. Much more is clearly needed in the areas of institutional development, establishing the rule of law, and changing the political culture to one in which all contending parties recognize that they are subject to lawful and democratically adopted constraints. The Cambodian people, too, must internalize the norms of political tolerance and compromise necessary for a democratic polity. Nevertheless, elections remain an essential feature of democracy. No meaningful, sustainable political reconciliation will take place until all the parties agree to a framework for the peaceful and fair transfer of power based on the will of the Cambodian people. ❀

Notes

1. There are several thorough accounts of the UNTAC period and the 1993 elections. See, for example, Michael Doyle, *UN Peacekeeping in Cambodia: UNTAC's Civil Mandate* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995); Trevor Findlay, *Cambodia: The Legacy and Lessons of UNTAC* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Frederick Z. Brown, "Cambodia's Rocky Venture in Democracy," in Krishna Kumar, ed., *Postconflict Elections, Democratization, and International Assistance* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998); James A. Schear, "Riding the Tiger: The United Nations and Cambodia's Struggle for Peace," in William J. Durch, ed., *UN Peacekeeping, American Policy, and the Uncivil Wars of the 1990s* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 135–191.
2. UN document A/46/608, S/23177, Annex 5, October 30, 1991, 8–47. The UN documents may also be found in the Appendix of Findlay, *Cambodia*, 171–207.
3. Schear, "Riding the Tiger," 176–177.
4. On UNTAC's mandate, see *ibid.*, 142–143.
5. See Findlay, *Cambodia*, 81.
6. See *Chapter VII, Article 90* of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia (adopted September 24, 1993), supplied by the embassy of the Kingdom of Cambodia in the United States.
7. See "NEC Investigates Allegations of Fraud," *Phnom Penh Post* 7, no. 16 (July 31–August 6, 1998): 1.
8. Doyle, *UN Peacekeeping in Cambodia*, 82.
9. David W. Ashley, "The Failure of Conflict Resolution in Cambodia," in *Cambodia and the International Community* (New York: Asia Society, 1998, 64).
10. NDI and IRI issued two reports during this period. See *Restoring Democracy in Cambodia: The Difficult Road Ahead* (Washington, D.C.: NDI-IRI, August 29, 1997); *The Continuing Crisis in Cambodia: Obstacles to Democratic Elections* (Washington, D.C.: NDI-IRI, January 30, 1998).
11. See "Cambodia: Fair Elections Not Possible," *Human Rights Watch Report* 10, no. 4 (June 1998).
12. The norms largely accepted by the international community can be found in Guy S. Goodwin-Gill, *Free and Fair Elections: International Law and Practice* (Geneva: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 1994); Carl W. Dundas, *Dimensions of Free and Fair Elections: Frameworks, Integrity, Transparency, Attributes, Monitoring* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1994); UN Centre for Human Rights, *Human Rights and*

Elections: A Handbook on the Legal, Technical, and Human Rights Aspects of Elections (New York and Geneva: United Nations, 1994).

13. See *Memorandum to the Royal Government of Cambodia*, submitted by the special representative of the United Nations secretary-general for human rights in Cambodia (Phnom Penh: UN Centre for Human Rights, May 13, 1998).
14. See Kay Johnson, "Group Says That Poll Could Be Credible — Not Fair," *Cambodia Daily* 13, issue 43 (Sunday, July 26, 1998): 1, 9.
15. See, for example, Matthew Granger, "International Observers Taking a Tougher Public Stance in Days before Polling," *Phnom Penh Post*, July 24–30, 1998, 10. The article argues that JIOG toughened its pre-election day statement in response to NDI-IRI criticisms that past JIOG statements had ignored the effects of Hun Sen's July 1997 coup. See also Matthew Granger, "Former Ambassador Says His Observers Will Balance US Opinion," *Phnom Penh Post*, July 24–30, 1998, 4.
16. Jeff Smith, "JIOG Says Poll, Tally, 'Free, Fair,'" *Cambodia Daily*, July 28, 1998, 1, 11.
17. See *Preliminary Statement of the IRI-NDI Delegation to the July 16, 1998, Elections in Cambodia*, press statement available from NDI and IRI offices in Washington, D.C.
18. Madeline Albright, quoted in "Albright Urges ASEAN to Press Cambodia," *Cambodia Daily*, July 29, 1998, 8.

Citizen Views of Peace Building and Political Transition in Angola, 1997

Carrie Manning

In November 1994, Angola began what became an often circular struggle to implement the Lusaka Protocol, the second of two peace agreements meant to put an end to more than thirty years of civil strife. Four years later, the Lusaka peace process appears to have come unraveled. Just past midway between these two points, the National Democratic Institute carried out a series of focus groups in Angola that sought to gauge citizens' attitudes toward and understanding of key aspects of the war-to-peace transition and the new political system. This article discusses the results of the survey. Initially intended to provide the basis of a program to furnish civic education and promote improved governance in a new political context, the focus group results now afford a glimpse into the citizens' view of the peace process on the eve of its collapse.

The results of the survey suggest that in the minds of Angolan citizens, even while the implementation of the peace process was moving forward, the war was far from over and that the attitudes and behavior of political elites, not ordinary citizens, would be decisive. The results indicate a surprisingly high level of general awareness and specific knowledge about the peace process and the basic principles of democracy and human rights, as well as a high degree of cynicism regarding the application of these principles in Angola. The survey also highlights the serious limitations inherent in a strategy that would focus entirely on citizens or "civil society" to reinforce Angola's transition to formal democracy, even when peace prevails.

"In politics, there is no such thing as reconciliation."

— Focus group participant in Luanda

Regrettably, since my last report, there has been no improvement in the already deplorable situation in Angola. The country continues to drift towards full-fledged hostilities, despite the renewed efforts of the international community to avoid a precipitous turn of events.

— Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola, August 6, 1998

Over the past four years, the Angolan government, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), the United Nations, and a number of Western powers have been engaged in an often circular struggle to implement the Lusaka

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Protocol, the peace agreement which formally ended the fighting that followed the country's first multiparty elections in 1992. The 1991 Bicesse Accords, which put an end to more than thirty years of civil strife, provided the backdrop for those elections.

Angola's peace process has been part of a dual transition: from war to peace and from single-party to multiparty rule. The linchpin of the peace process is the construction of democratic institutions and power-sharing arrangements at national, provincial, and local levels. Nothing in Angola's history has prepared either the general public or government officials to participate in a democratically based political system. Furthermore, the transition to formal democracy has in some senses advanced ahead of the transition from war to peace. A weak, formally democratic system is struggling to survive alongside an ongoing and increasingly acute armed conflict in which the combatants are also the principal protagonists in the new political system.

In this challenging environment, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) was asked to design a program that would help to bridge the gap between the new political system as envisioned and as practiced. The program sought to improve the quality of interaction between citizens and government in the new democratic political context by working at two levels: building the capacity of ordinary citizens to understand and interact with government officials, especially at the local level, and training local government officials in methods for improving local governance through a more active engagement with local citizenry.

Toward this end, NDI, in mid-1997, conducted the first comprehensive public survey on attitudes and knowledge of basic democratic principles and processes in Angola. The focus group research began with a basic premise: that the attitudes and behavior of ordinary citizens toward the political system will ultimately affect whether the system thrives or fails. Accordingly, focus group questions were designed to gauge citizens' attitudes toward and understanding of key aspects of the transition process and the new political system. The information gathered in this survey was intended to provide the basis for a large-scale civic education effort to be conducted at the grassroots level and through radio programming.

Primary topics covered included: the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation; the broader process of national and community-level reconciliation; the functions of local government authorities; and human rights and constitutional rights.

The results of the focus groups suggest first that Angolan citizens do not necessarily share in the assumption that citizen attitudes and behavior are of primary importance, instead placing much greater emphasis on the attitudes and behavior of political elites. They lay the bulk of the responsibility both for ending the war and for establishing a functioning, inclusive political system squarely on the shoulders of government and UNITA leadership.

Returning to our premise, however, an examination of citizen attitudes toward the new political system and the transition process suggests a sense of frustration not so much with the proposed democratic political system as a system of government as with the way it is being implemented in Angola.

After setting out the context in which these focus groups were carried out and the methodology followed, I present the results of the research, preserving as much as possible the voices of the participants themselves, ending with a brief discussion of the policy implications of the focus group results.

Historical Context

The roots of Angola's civil war reach to the period of its struggle for independence from Portugal in the 1960s. The 1960s and early 1970s were marked by tensions between three independence movements: the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), and UNITA. While these engaged in shifting alliances with one another while fighting the Portuguese, all were vying for the right to take the reigns of government at independence. By 1975, the three movements had agreed to share power in an uneasy transitional government that never came off. By the date established for independence, November 11, 1975, the three movements had divided Angola in three, with the MPLA in control of Luanda, the capital. While the MPLA declared victory in Luanda, UNITA and the FNLA proclaimed the popular republic of Angola in the central province of Huambo. Essentially, the war between these movements that had begun before independence picked up after a momentary lull during which power was transferred from the Portuguese to the MPLA.

Angola's war became one of the prime Cold War proxy battlefields in Africa. Cuban troops were sent to reinforce the MPLA in its struggles against South Africa-backed and U.S.-backed UNITA. Finally, in 1991, the MPLA government and UNITA signed the Bicesse Accords, which led to the country's first multiparty elections in September 1992. Civil war began anew in the wake of those elections, however, as UNITA refused to accept the results. The most recent peace accord, the Lusaka Protocol, was signed in November 1994. Its future remains in question, as four years and three United Nations peacekeeping missions later, major provisions of the Lusaka Protocol remain to be implemented.

Mid-1997, when NDI's focus groups were carried out, was an especially challenging time in Angola. The peace process was making only halting progress, having been relaunched with the Lusaka Protocol two years after renewed civil war broke out following the country's first multiparty elections in 1992. Throughout 1996, key aspects of the protocol, including the creation of a Government of National Unity and Reconciliation (GURN), which would incorporate UNITA in the cabinet and at provincial and local government levels, the reseating of UNITA members of Parliament elected in 1992, and the unification of territorial administration, had been repeatedly put off. In April 1997, the GURN was established at cabinet level, although installation of government and local officials proceeded much more slowly and in some cases not at all. Seventy UNITA deputies took their seats in Parliament, and although UNITA's leader, Jonas Savimbi, declined to come to Luanda for the swearing-in of the new government, it was possible to sense renewed optimism regarding the outcome of Angola's troubled peace process.

Optimism proved unjustified. Just one month after the formation of the unity government, Angolan government forces and UNITA soldiers found themselves on opposite sides of the war in neighboring Zaire, where UNITA's longtime ally Mobutu Sese Seko was soon to be deposed by the rebel troops of Laurent Kabila. The scenario would be repeated within a matter of months in Congo-Brazzaville, where another of UNITA's allies was routed with the help of Angolan government troops. Fighting between government and UNITA troops resumed in the diamond-rich provinces of Lunda Norte and Lunda Sul, and security in other areas around the central highlands was constantly in jeopardy.

These events of course foretold trouble for the peace process in Angola. More than a

year later, the military situation is even more unstable. Fighting in the Lundas has spread to the neighboring provinces of Malanje and Uíge, and some sources report that more than a million people are internally displaced. The peace process, no longer merely stalled as it was for much of 1997, now appears to be in full retreat. On September 1, 1998, the government suspended UNITA members of GURN as well as UNITA's seventy-member parliamentary delegation. All but two of the GURN members and most members of Parliament were reinstated after the formation of UNITA-Renovada (UNITA revised/renewed), a UNITA faction that has severed links to Jonas Savimbi and is therefore "acceptable" to the Angolan government. This split appears to have occasioned serious tension among UNITA members in Luanda and served as a license for local government forces to step up persecution of UNITA officials throughout the country who have not sworn allegiance to UNITA-Renovada. Needless to say, other principal elements of the Lusaka process, including the extension of state administration to key areas of the country and the demilitarization of UNITA and its transformation into a legal political party, still face formidable obstacles. Official meetings between the government and UNITA to discuss the peace process are increasingly rare. The peace process has been severely complicated by the fact that there are now effectively two UNITAs, each claiming exclusive legitimacy.

In his October 1998 report to the UN Security Council, Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced plans to reduce significantly the number of UN peacekeeping personnel in the country unless real progress is made toward restarting the peace process.

Focus Group Methodology

Thirty focus groups were conducted, in both government and UNITA-controlled areas, in the provinces of Huambo, Bie, and Uíge, and in Luanda. Focus group participants included male and female students fourteen to nineteen years of age; members of associations, churches, and other community organizations twenty to twenty-four years of age; urban and rural teachers; demobilized soldiers; women and young men marketplace vendors; urban and rural heads of family; urban and rural adult men of various professions; married women, farmers, internally displaced people; and the elderly.

The project began with broad consultations with Angolan sociologists and survey researchers on sample design and on the development of the discussion guide. NDI's partners in this phase were drawn from the Angolan Association for Rural and Environmental Development (ADRA-Angolana), the National Institute of Statistics, and Agostinho Neto University. From July 2 to 4, the first focus group moderator training workshop was held in Luanda. Eighteen moderator candidates from Luanda and Huambo underwent two days of training and practical exercises, followed by a day at an internally displaced persons camp in which each moderator had the opportunity to moderate a focus group. Twelve moderators, of whom ten spoke one of the national languages of Huambo or Uíge, were selected from this group to participate in the focus group research project.

Two weeks later, the twelve moderators experienced an additional day of training and orientation to the research project. In Uíge, a two-day training workshop was held to train additional moderators to work in that province. This was partly in response to the refusal of UNITA officials to permit "Angolans from Luanda" or any other part of the country to conduct this sort of activity in their areas. (This did not prove to be a

problem in Huambo or Bie, primarily because the traditionally UNITA areas in which all the focus groups being conducted there had come under government control in the weeks before the groups were organized.) In Uíge, the workshop was conducted in collaboration with the bipartisan Provincial Human Rights Commission, an organization that brings together teachers, lawyers, and other interested individuals from the city of Uíge (government-controlled) and nearby Negage (UNITA's northern regional capital) to discuss human rights issues. The group has received substantial support from the United Nations Verification Mission Human Rights Unit in Uíge. The focus groups were conducted from July 7 to August 30, 1997.

Results

The findings of the focus group research are in two sections, the specifics of the political transition process questions about permanent features of the political system, including the meaning of democracy and the peculiarities of its practice in Angola, the role of local government authorities, and the meaning and significance of human and constitutional rights.

The Transition Process

The End of the Year

“A radio diz que a guerra acabou mas nós não concordamos.” (The radio says the war is over but we don't agree.)¹

“A radio agita a guerra mas quando a radio e os jornais disserem que a guerra acabou, entao vamos acreditar.” (The radio agitates for war — when the radio and the newspapers say that the war is over, then we will believe it.)²

The war is by no means over according to the majority of people who participated in this research. The overwhelming majority said that, for them, the war would be truly over when there was freedom of movement and commerce. This is one of the key provisions of the Lusaka Protocol, and those who cited it usually adopted the “official” wording from the protocol — “free circulation of people and goods.” Other protocol provisions mentioned were demobilization and reintegration of UNITA soldiers and unification of the army.

In the Lusaka Protocol, that phrase refers to unimpaired movement between government and UNITA zones. However, this does not necessarily mean that people are preoccupied with the implementation of one specific piece of the protocol. In fact, the focus group results caution against a strictly political interpretation of the phrase. For focus group participants, free circulation has two important nonpolitical implications: goods continue to be artificially expensive, whether they are imported or produced within the country, as long as free circulation is impaired; and free circulation also requires that people not be hassled by the police as they go about their daily lives.

For example, free circulation was cited more frequently in Luanda focus groups than those in the provinces. This is surprising, since people in Luanda do not undergo the daily experience of having to cross between government and UNITA zones to see relatives or to buy goods not available in their area. The following comment, for one, is from a focus group with internally displaced people in Luanda. “People are not living freely; there is not free circulation from one place to another . . . I myself was

intercepted by the police and had to give them two million kwanzas, and I began to think that democracy is false in our country.”³

The second most frequently cited indication that the war had really ended would be the arrival of Savimbi in Luanda. This answer came up most often in Huambo and Bie.

Finally, there was a good deal of emphasis in Luanda on the behavior of the police. One student said that the end of the war would mean “that the police stop mistreating the people.”⁴ The police are discussed in more detail below.

Reconciliation

For most individuals, the greatest obstacle to reconciliation is division caused by the war, principally the fact that people tended to be aligned or were perceived to be aligned with either one side or the other.

Reconciliation was understood as “forgetting about war,” “the end of mistrust,” “learning how to live together,” “forgetting the past and pardoning our neighbors,” “joining hands and singing with one voice,” “recognizing that no one has been ‘defeated’ at the level of the family or the community.” Others emphasized the importance of communication, of opening a dialogue in order for reconciliation to occur.

The overwhelming majority of focus group participants felt that reconciliation was the responsibility of the government or of the two warring parties, the MPLA government and UNITA. Most people distinguished between *national* reconciliation and reconciliation at the community level. At the national level, responsibility for reconciliation was most often attributed to the government. At the community level, it was *sobas* (traditional community leaders), church leaders, and “the people in general” or “all of us.” The UN was also cited as one of the principal entities responsible for reconciliation in Angola. Only one person argued that the people themselves had to provide the momentum and the example for their leaders. “The people should send to their leaders the message of peace and national reconciliation.”⁵

Those who had concrete suggestions for how to promote national reconciliation tended to favor one of two remedies: government intervention at the community level in the form of meetings and speeches about reconciliation and improved communication about the peace process.

Many identified the need to change mentalities in order for reconciliation to be successful. “There must be a revolution in the mind of each person. I cannot stop talking to someone just because his father is from UNITA.”⁶ Others emphasized the importance of communication, of opening a dialogue in order for reconciliation to occur. As one participant put it, “Communication is necessary in order for people to unite.”⁷ More concretely, the media should play a role in promoting reconciliation. “On both sides there are people who want war, and the media should broadcast messages against war.”⁸

There was a strong perception that reconciliation would be easier at the grassroots level than at the political level. “In politics there is no such thing as reconciliation.”⁹ On a social level, however, people were able to cite numerous examples of informal reconciliation. One participant cited the following example of reconciliation in practice at the community level: “Here there is a neighborhood for UNITA members of Parliament where a party was organized two weeks after they arrived, a so-called National Reconciliation Celebration. And no one asked if your father was from the MPLA or from UNITA. At these small parties people start to become friends and the separation ends.”¹⁰

In addition to political differences, people underscored ethnicity and differences in living standards as factors causing separation or division in their communities.

GURN and the Extension of State Administration

“On April 11 when the GURN was inaugurated I was very happy, I thought that it would mean big changes. But until now nothing has changed because we see that those in government only want to fill their pockets and those of their families, to make up for lost time.”¹¹

The vast majority of focus group participants had heard of the Government of National Unity and Reconciliation and knew what it was. Those who had never heard of the GURN or who had heard of it but didn’t know what it was were distributed fairly evenly between Luanda and the provinces. Typical descriptions of the GURN follow.

“The GURN is the union of people from many parties.”¹²

“The GURN is a government constituted by members of various parties.”¹³

“The GURN is a group formed by people from all parties to be able to lead the country.”¹⁴

“It is to see whether in fact Angolans can achieve reconciliation.”¹⁵

Most people had heard about GURN through radio, television, or friends and neighbors. Other important sources of information were newspapers and local religious leaders and government officials. In general, the less people knew about GURN, the more they were inclined to be optimistic about it. As one participant put it, “I don’t know anything about the GURN, but it seems that it will resolve the problems of the people.”¹⁶ Among those who said they knew what GURN was all about, feelings about what GURN could do were mixed, although the great majority was cynical about the likelihood of any positive impact. Those who did believe that GURN would be able to deliver thought it would bring an end to the war and promote reconciliation, but that this would take time.

“I think that we cannot construct a life from one day to the next. When you get a job, on the first day you commit many errors. Those who are in the government now don’t have experience. We have to give them time to improve their work.”¹⁷

GURN “was a positive stop, a sign of hope for a better Angola.”¹⁸

GURN —“that’s where we can end all the talk that we have heard, about war.”¹⁹

The majority of focus group participants, however, saw in GURN business as usual. Their responses reflect not so much an opinion of the performance of GURN itself, which had been functioning for only a few months at the time of the research, but a profound skepticism about the abilities and intentions of government in general.

GURN “is lard, and only those who are there are going to get fat and not us.”²⁰

GURN “is not going to resolve the problems of the population, and it is going to create an economic crisis because of the purchase of luxury cars [by government officials] and because [those in government] only think about themselves.”²¹

“The GURN will resolve the problems of the government and not the people.”²²

“The GURN is not resolving anything; it puts nothing in practice; there are even new threats of war.”²³

“It came to make our problems worse, since now there is enmity and distrust [within the government].”²⁴

“From the information that I have, the GURN met and then did nothing.”²⁵

“I don’t see reconciliation — they just point fingers; that’s what I know about the GURN.”²⁶

“The GURN will only have value when it is understood that governance means providing services to the people.”²⁷

“The simple fact that we have ministers from four parties in government doesn’t mean reconciliation. Are they the only Angolans? If so, then we will also make our war.”²⁸

Others would be more positive about the potential positive effects of GURN, if only it functioned the way it was envisioned, if only it was for real.

GURN “might bring us good intentions, but we want them to be put into practice.”²⁹

“We don’t see evidence of their work. Lots of promises, little practice.”³⁰

And finally, “There is hope, but only Dr. Savimbi knows for sure.”³¹

Extension of State Administration

“In Quibala, the GURN was beat up”³² (The first exercise in extending state administration ended in failure at Quibala after reaching only a few municipalities. Members of GURN were severely beaten when they arrived in Quibala to swear in new municipal officials.)

Focus group participants were surprisingly well informed about the process of extending state administration. Most knew not only what it was but some detail about it, either where administration had already been extended and why or when it was stopped. Many gave reasons for the failure of the process.

“It is difficult now for someone who fought for twenty years against a regime to accept a new flag.”³³

“If [the leaders] were thinking about the people, state administration would already be extended all over the country.”³⁴

“UNITA doesn’t want extension of state administration, because UNITA wants to stay at war.”³⁵

Several people emphasized the importance not only of extending the state physically but of changing people’s attitudes toward the process and educating them about it. “We have to create the right mentality for a real reestablishment of the state.”³⁶ As another participant put it, “We don’t believe in extension of state administration because all of the forces of society are not in agreement that this process should be carried out, so we simply have vandalism by one side against another.”³⁷

Democracy, the Role of Local Authorities, Human and Constitutional Rights

The Meaning of Democracy

“*Estamos a pagar pla democracia muito mal dada.*” (We are paying for democracy poorly done.)

A strikingly high proportion of focus group participants demonstrated at least a basic understanding of the term “democracy.” In only one group did members say they had no

idea what democracy was or fail to provide examples of basic democratic principles.

For the majority of focus group participants, democracy was most closely associated with freedom of expression. Freedom of movement, tolerance, and mutual respect were also cited as key aspects of democracy. Freedom of expression, however, was far ahead of the others in terms of the number of times it was cited. Linked to the issue of freedom of expression was the idea that in democracy, citizens' voices should have an impact on governance.

In neither respect, however, did democratic theory and practice coincide in Angola, in the minds of focus group participants. For example, most participants believed that in a democracy, people are free to speak their minds without fear of reprisal. They then went on to explain that this was not the case in Angola. Those who cited freedom of expression as a fundamental part of democracy usually ended the phrase with the words "without fear of reprisals" or simply "without fear." One group pointed out that "people call in to radio shows to express their opinions and ideas, but they have to request anonymity to protect themselves."³⁸

Similarly, in terms of accountability of government to the people, Angola does not qualify as a democracy in the minds of most focus group participants. "In a democracy, the government should listen to the ideas of the people who elected them, but in this democracy [in Angola], this provision does not exist in practice."³⁹ Another participant reinforced this view, saying there is no democracy now because "the population does not have a voice."⁴⁰

A surprisingly high level of understanding of the basic values of democracy is matched by high levels of frustration and cynicism regarding the wide gap between the theory and practice of democracy in Angola. "Our leaders want to show the people that democracy means to rob, kill, and do whatever you want without being punished."⁴¹

There is also a strong link in people's minds between democracy and the functioning of specific government institutions — people understand that in a democracy there are certain government institutions which ought to work in a certain way. The behavior of the police, for example, is for many people contrary to basic notions of democracy. "When I hear the word *democracy* I get irritated because it is a word that is used very often but does not exist in practice. . . . Someone comes and steals my wallet, my watch, and the police do nothing."⁴² Government institutions do not function the way they should and are not accountable to citizens.

This was particularly true in the case of the police and not simply because they are unresponsive to citizens' needs. If there was one theme that ran across region, gender, age, occupation, and educational level, it was a preoccupation with police abuse. Although the discussion guide did not contain a separate section on the police, the discussions elicited so much comment on them, almost all of it negative, that I think it is important to highlight these expressions here.

According to one young community activist, "it is much better these days to come across a petty criminal than to come across the police."⁴³ Others agreed: "Our security is always at risk; the police who should protect us turn out to be more dangerous than the criminals."⁴⁴ "The police very often contribute to disorder."⁴⁵

Interestingly, despite the fact that most people said they believed the police were responsible for causing at least as many problems as they resolved, nearly everyone named the police as the entity that guarantees their personal safety.

Another intriguing twist is that most people, when asked what they would do if they suffered police abuse, said they would complain to an officer's superiors. This would

seem to indicate a certain amount of faith in the institution of the police, if not the individual members with whom people come in contact.

A minority of participants voiced despair with the system as well. We have no recourse; there are no courts; if the authorities abuse us, to whom can we complain?⁴⁶ Or “We are always suffering abuse and there is nothing we can do. The system allows these abuses to multiply.”⁴⁷

Most, however, had concrete solutions for police abuse. Asked what they would do, most answered along the following lines:

“Try to find [the police officer’s] unit and inform them.”⁴⁸

“We should go to the appropriate authorities of his squadron and if that doesn’t work, go directly to the tribunal.”⁴⁹

“If going to his squadron didn’t resolve the case, one would go immediately to the Provincial Command of the Angolan National Police to see if they can resolve it or not. If not, one would go to the institutions of military justice, since he is part of the military.”⁵⁰

There is a widespread perception among the groups surveyed that a double standard is in effect in Angola’s political system. Cynicism was expressed in general terms as well as through specific examples. For example, two common responses were, “In other countries it means freedom, but in Angola democracy is only for ‘the haves.’”⁵¹ “The word *democracy* is only for those who eat well.”⁵²

A group of teachers in Luanda gave a more specific example, which highlights the responsibilities rather than the rights associated with democracy. “Democracy extends only to the masses, it doesn’t reach elites. For example, if a high-level person kills someone, nothing happens. Justice doesn’t reach this person; he takes the law into his own hands. For democracy, everyone must be equal under the law.”⁵³

Two other issues were closely associated with democracy in participants’ minds. These were peace and an improvement in living standards. Democracy is not possible without peace, and peace and democracy will bring about improvement in people’s well-being.

Local Government: Who Is in Charge?

This question was first posed as “Who are the local authorities here?” or “Who is in charge here?” Moderators then presented a series of hypothetical problems and asked how the group members would go about trying to resolve them. The resulting answers were put into the form of a diagram of the local hierarchy of authority. In some cases, each focus group participant made his or her own diagram. In others, the moderator drew the diagram on the basis of what the group said.

Virtually all focus group participants in Uige, including demobilized soldiers and male and female students, described the hierarchy as follows: provincial government, Angolan Armed Forces (FAA), Police, the people.

In some cases, FAA and the police were at the same level of authority. This perception of the police and military and paramilitary units as intermediaries between the government and the people was also present in Luanda but less prevalent. In Luanda, the police figured most prominently for younger participants aged fifteen to twenty-five. Since Uige focus group participants were disproportionately young compared with Luanda, Huambo, and Bie, age may play a part. Also important may be the fact that the

city of Uige is seen by the government as an island in a sea of UNITA, which very likely translates into tighter security and a larger role for the police and defense forces.

In Luanda, the police figured less prominently in people's diagrams but were still present. Two of the nine groups that said they had a clear idea of who the local authorities were named the police in second place, right after the local administrator. The diagrams drawn in Luanda were less uniform than those in Uige. As a rule, the Luandans gave more detail about formal structures at the local level. For example, most people named not only the local administrator but also the neighborhood administrators and heads of residents committees.

In Huambo and Bie, there was more emphasis on the governor, the four vice-governors, and traditional authorities. There was also a very clear separation between urban areas and rural areas. Two kinds of organizational diagrams were typical: (1) urban areas, governor, vice-governors, government officials, traditional authorities. (2) rural areas, *soba*, coordinator, *seculos* — assistant *sobas*.

Traditional authorities were hardly mentioned in Uige and in Luanda, no doubt because focus groups took place primarily in urban or periurban areas there.

In addition to seeking to understand people's notions of the hierarchy of local government authority, the focus groups raised specific examples of various kinds of problems to get a general idea of how people viewed the role of various government and nongovernment actors in resolving the challenges they face daily.

For the most part, people appeared to have low material expectations of the government, but they retained faith in government institutions. When a community required social services, for example, in very few cases was the solution simply to go to the government and seek support. Usually, as in the instance of rehabilitating a school or a clinic, people said that they would try to organize members of the community to do the required work, that they would get together and buy medicines to supply a clinic, or that they would turn to nongovernment organizations (NGOs) for help.

At the same time, however, people across the board had very clear ideas about which authorities were supposed to deal with which kinds of problems. If people almost never invoked the government in general as provider of their needs, they almost always named a specific government department responsible for resolving a range of problems from conflicts over housing and land to teacher corruption. For example, almost everyone responded that if a problem arose over conflicting claims to a house, they would demand documentation from the other claimant and direct the problem to the Department of Housing. In the case of teachers demanding bribes from parents to allow their children to study, the most common answer was that one would speak to the director of the school, and if that didn't work they would speak to the local or provincial delegate for education. Similarly, in the situation of a maternity hospital that was surrounded by mines, most people had concrete suggestions as to whom to ask for help: usually the police or the local army unit, and in one case INAROI, the Angolan national agency responsible for land mine removal, was identified.

No one, however, said that the government was satisfying their needs, and when the question "Does the government succeed in satisfying your needs?" was posed directly, most of the answers were extremely cynical. The following are some typical replies.

"There is not support from the government, and they satisfy our needs when it suits them."⁵⁴

"The government might do some things, but it is not enough. NGOs help us more."⁵⁵

"Years ago, the government had the capacity to satisfy our needs, but today it doesn't and is considered incapable. Now we get some help from NGOs, who help us in the construction of schools, clinics, etc. That's how the people survive."⁵⁶

"Local government doesn't meet the needs of our families. We only survive with the help of NGOs and the church."⁵⁷

"The local authorities don't succeed in meeting anyone's needs because they are only interested in the well-being of themselves and their families."⁵⁸

"The government hasn't helped the people in a long time. On the contrary, it is the people who help the government."⁵⁹

Traditional authorities play an important role in meeting community needs and resolving conflicts at the local level. For most people contacted in Huambo and Bie, *sobas* are the first and most important line of authority at the community level. In general, *sobas* appear to be most influential in solving problems within the family and in disputes over land. People tended to distinguish between *sobas* and local administrators in terms of the origins of their authority: "Government authorities receive orders from the government and resolve issues on the basis of government law. Traditional leaders work on the basis of traditional law; their orders come from tradition."⁶⁰

Human Rights

A surprisingly high number of focus group participants, across age groups, region, and occupational and educational status, are familiar with the concept of "rights" and have a basic notion of the meaning of human rights.

"They are the rights of citizens."⁶¹

"Human rights means to treat others as human beings."⁶²

"Respect for life, the rights of others."⁶³

"To have the right to live, to do what you know how to do without the interference of anyone."⁶⁴

"Human rights means that every Angolan citizen should feel free, should not be oppressed."⁶⁵

"It is to feel at peace, and to have everything that you work for."⁶⁶

"It is to walk freely without fear of stepping on land mines."⁶⁷

Equally striking is the sense of the participants that human rights, as they define them, are not systematically respected in Angola.

"Human rights is freedom of movement, personal liberty, in sum everything that no one has been able to achieve up until now."⁶⁸

"Many die and are killed because these [human] rights have been taken away."⁶⁹

[Citing the fact that crimes are provoked by police and their commanders, and nothing is done about them, that there are no jobs for returning students from abroad, and so forth,] "There are no human rights in Golfe."⁷⁰

In addition to the conventionally defined concept of human rights, for the focus group participants those rights also included socioeconomic claims to housing, employ-

ment, decent salaries, and education.

“Human rights are all of those rights that a person should have for their social, economic, and cultural well-being.”⁷¹

“There are no human rights because we have trouble just getting enough to eat; we are very limited in financial terms.”⁷²

“It is to enjoy a little bit of all the riches of the country. Right now we are stagnating and no one enjoys the riches of the country and this is not human rights. Human rights is to have everything you need to live.”⁷³

One group pointed out that it is incorrect to think that human rights violations are committed only by the police. All forms of deprivation — for example, absence of electricity, water, salary — are violations of human rights. Asked what were the most important individual rights, participants again highlighted freedom of expression and freedom of movement. The following were most frequently cited: freedom of movement, including free circulation between government and UNITA zones and freedom to move about town and between their homes and fields without being harassed; socioeconomic rights — work, decent salary, education, home, health care; freedom of expression. One participant summed up freedom thus: “To be able to leave here and go anywhere at all without fear and talk about the problems that afflict us without suffering reprisals.”⁷⁴

One of NDI’s goals in this section was to ascertain whether people had a notion of rights being accompanied by duties and whether “freedom” also implied responsibilities. The answer was a resounding yes. Virtually everyone was careful to make the distinction between *liberdade* (liberty) and *libertinagem* (libertinism). For the focus group participants, laws, and the duty to uphold them, made the difference between liberty and anarchy. “*Sem leis, todos andam na libertinagem.*” (Without laws, we are all just libertines.)⁷⁵ Most noted that liberty must also imply respect for others.

Law

For most people, laws exist to preserve order and to organize the life of the community. “Without laws, the people do not advance . . . without laws no one has respect for anyone else.”⁷⁶ Once again, however, the participants expressed the sentiment that while this was true in the ideal, it was not true for them. “The law exists, but it is not enforced.”⁷⁷ “The law is just, but it is not followed.”⁷⁸

Another recurring theme reemerged in this section, the notion of a double standard in terms of the way elites and ordinary people are treated. Earlier, someone noted that democracy was for the poor, meaning only ordinary people were subject to the limitations of the law and other democratic institutions. Here the same idea resurfaces. “Law is for the poor.”⁷⁹

This group went on to give an example of a general, now an ambassador, who killed someone and never went to prison for it. Another group cited a similar example involving a local military commander and an ordinary citizen.

Most people know that the law comes from “the government.” A slightly smaller number of people were able to identify the Parliament as the country’s chief legislative organ, although given that most bills originate in the executive and must pass through the Council of Ministers before going to Parliament, perhaps the government, in the

sense of the executive, is the most accurate answer. The minority responses were the most interesting in this section. The third most frequent answer to the question Who makes the laws? was the police. Other answers included local administrators, *sobas*, and the courts. One person answered that the people make the laws.

The Constitution

As for the constitutional law, the numbers of people who had and had not heard of it were about evenly divided. Those who ventured an answer to its definition were for the most part correct in their perceptions. The following are sample answers. "The constitutional law is the guidelines drawn up by government which the people should follow; it is a statute or regulation that we can all follow."⁸⁰ "It's an order that establishes what must be done in a country."⁸¹

Others had heard of it but were disinterested or disgusted. "We have heard of the constitutional law but we don't pay any attention, we are not interested in it."⁸² "It has no practical utility — they are always changing it."⁸³ "We have never heard or seen a copy of the constitutional law; I think it must not be widely distributed."⁸⁴

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Looking back, the 1997 focus groups provide a rough portrait of a country caught in limbo between a partial and increasingly fragile peace and a return to all-out war. They capture the prevailing sense of instability and record the widespread conviction that the war was not yet over. For most participants, the removal of barriers to movement and commerce throughout the country, which had consistently been erected by both sides, would be the most important sign that peace had truly arrived. The second most frequently cited indicator of war's end would be Jonas Savimbi's installation in the capital. Clearly, in the minds of most participants, the remaining barriers to peace were coming from the top, not from ordinary citizens.

Focus group participants demonstrated a high level of both general awareness and specific knowledge about key aspects of the peace process. They also understood some of the basic principles of both democracy and human rights. At the same time, they were keenly aware that these principles were systematically violated in Angola. Two fundamental liberties were identified over and over again as being both the most important democratic freedoms and the most difficult to exercise under current conditions: freedom of expression and free circulation of people and goods. It is important to note that while participants evinced strongly negative and cynical feelings toward government in general, these same negative feelings were not applied to democracy as such. Frustration was with the fact that "real" democracy was not practiced in Angola rather than with democracy as a system of government.

People were fairly well versed in how local authorities are supposed to help them resolve the problems they confront in their daily lives. Most, for example, were able to cite specific government departments designed to resolve particular problems. However, people also felt very sharply the government's inability or unwillingness to address their most pressing problems.

While participants had an intuitive notion of what government should and should not be doing, there was a much lower level of understanding about the law, particularly the constitutional law that sets out the basic rights and responsibilities of citizens as well as

the formal limits on the state. In some areas, notably Uige and to a lesser extent Luanda, there is also a general perception that the police, the Angolan Armed Forces, and civil defense forces are the principal intermediaries between the people and the government. This perception is probably firmly rooted in local reality. Many people believe that the police themselves make the laws. Again, for all intents and purposes this may be true in some locations.

While the focus groups suggest that there was and is important work to be done to empower individual citizens and advocacy groups to make Angola's exemplary democratic constitution effective in practice, they also point up sharply drawn limits to what can be achieved from below, from outside the state and the formal political system. First, the matters of most concern to citizens are those over which they have the least control. Achieving a measure of political stability, freedom of movement, freedom of expression and association, all depend to a great extent on the ability of the government and UNITA to put a decisive end to their conflict. Ongoing low-intensity controversy, such as that which has marked the Angolan peace process from the outset, offers almost limitless opportunities for human rights violations and myriad extra-judicial activity under cover of "legitimate" defensive action. The most well-informed activist and courageous citizens are obviously no match for the combined repressive powers of a government and armed rebel movement at war with each other.

Second, the focus group results suggest that even after an effective political settlement is achieved between the warring parties, civic education efforts should focus not on ordinary citizens alone, but on civic education and training to improve the capacity of those parts of the Angolan government that come in direct contact with Angolan citizens, particularly on issues related to human and constitutional rights. These include the police, the armed forces, and local judicial and administrative officials. For many focus group participants, government is not a bewildering maze but a place with known departments that are meant to resolve specific problems. The difficulty is that when people go to these departments, when they interact with the individuals who represent government in their daily lives, their needs are not met and their faith in the system is continually eroded. This is demonstrated in the striking contrast between what people say about how they would resolve concrete problems and their attitude toward the government as a whole. They say they would go to a specific department, yet their expectations that their needs would be met there are close to zero.

How useful are these focus groups in helping us to understand the downward spiral away from a successful political settlement to Angola's long-running conflict? Do they provide important insights into the troubles with the Lusaka Protocol then looming large on the horizon? In conveying a sense of uncertainty and instability about the peace process, in insisting that the war was not yet over, they are certainly consistent with what was to come. But they are also important on another level — they reinforce the notion that there is a disconnect between those who are responsible for bringing about peace and structuring the new political system and the majority who must live according to its rules, and they highlight the yawning chasm between the stated goals of the Lusaka process — peace, national reconciliation, effective multiparty democracy — and reality. ❀

Notes

1. Mutilados de guerra, male (hereafter M), 20–30, Kilombo, Huambo.
2. Youth, M, 17–25, Camussamba, Huambo.
3. Deslocados, M, 35–47, Luanda.
4. Students, female (hereafter F), 15–19, Cazenga.
5. Market women, 35–55, Kunge, Bie.
6. Community activists, M, 20–24, Golfe, Luanda.
7. Teachers, M/F, 26–37, Golfe, Luanda.
8. Students, M, 25–30, Kuito, Bie.
9. Men, 50–59, Operario, Luanda.
10. Community activists, M, 20–24, Golfe, Luanda.
11. Youth, F, 22–26, Golfe, Luanda.
12. Catequists, Chivela, Huambo.
13. Students, M, 25–35, Kuito, Bie.
14. Teachers, M, 25–35, Chinguar, Bie.
15. Women, 59+, Operario, Luanda.
16. War-disabled veterans, M, 30–59, Kilombo, Huambo.
17. Youth, F, 22–26, Golfe, Luanda.
18. Students, F, 16–18, Uige.
19. Deslocados, M, 45–59, Benfica, Luanda.
20. Students, F, 16–18, Cazenga, Luanda.
21. Youth, M, 19–25, Uige.
22. Students, M, 14–18, M. Uige.
23. War-disabled veterans, M, 20–30, Kilombo, Huambo.
24. Students, F, 16–18, Uige.
25. Students, F, Cazenga, Luanda.
26. Community activists, M, 20–25, Golfe, Luanda.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Women, 59+, Operario, Luanda.
30. Students, F, 16–18, Uige.
31. Demobilized soldiers, M, 19–32, Uige.
32. Employed men, 25–59, Golfe, Luanda.
33. Community activists, M, 20–24, Golfe, Luanda.
34. War-disabled soldiers/community leaders, M, 30–55, Kilombo, Huambo.
35. Deslocados, M, 45–59, Benfica, Luanda.
36. Community activists, M, 20–24, Golfe, Luanda.
37. Women, 59+, Operario, Luanda.
38. Teachers, M/F, 26–37, Golfe, Luanda.
39. Secondary school students, M, 25–35, Kuito, Bie.
40. Teachers, M/F, 26–37, Golfe, Luanda.
41. Students, F, 16–18, Cazenga, Luanda.
42. Youth, F, 22–26, Golfe, Luanda.
43. Community activists, M, 20–24, Golfe, Luanda.
44. Ibid.
45. Students, F, 16–18, Uige.
46. Youth, M, 19–24, Uige.
47. Community activists, M, 20–24, Golfe, Luanda.
48. Deslocados, M, 45–55, Benfica, Luanda.
49. Youth, F, 15–19, Cazenga, Luanda.
50. Women, 59+, Operario, Luanda.
51. Community leaders, M, 30–55, Kilombo, Huambo.
52. Deslocados, M, 25–45, Benfica, Luanda.
53. Teachers, M/F, 26–37, Golfe, Luanda.
54. Students, F, 16–18, Cazenga, Luanda.
55. Students, F, 16–18, Uige.

56. Women, 59-, Operario, Luanda.
57. Youth, M, 18-20, Operario, Luanda.
58. Students, M, 25-35, Kuito, Bie.
59. Catechists, M/F, 25-40, Chivela, Huambo.
60. Women, 59+, Operario, Luanda.
61. Youth, M, 18-20, Operario, Luanda.
62. Women, 59+, Operario, Luanda.
63. Youth, M, 19-24, Uige.
64. Students, F, 16-18, Cazenga, Luanda.
65. Demobilized soldiers, M, 19-32, Uige.
66. War-disabled veterans, M, 30-59, Kilombo, Huambo.
67. Ibid.
68. Community activists, M, 20-24, Golfe, Luanda.
69. Students, F, 16-18, Uige.
70. Teachers, M/F, 25-36, Golfe, Luanda.
71. Students, M, 25-35, Kuito, Bie.
72. Community leaders, M, 30-55, Kilombo, Huambo.
73. Demobilized soldiers, M, 20-36, Huambo.
74. Community activists, M, 20-24, Golfe, Luanda.
75. Students, F, 16-18, Uige.
76. Demobilized soldiers, M, 19-32, Uige.
77. Youth, F, 22-26, Golfe, Luanda.
78. Youth, M, 19-24, Uige.
79. Men of diverse labor status, 25-59, Golfe, Luanda.
80. Teachers, M, 25-35, Chinguar, Bie.
81. Students, F, 16-18, Cazenga, Luanda.
82. War-disabled soldiers, M, 30-54, Kilombo, Huambo.
83. Community activists, M, 20-24, Golfe, Luanda.
84. Students, M, 25-35, Kuito, Bie.

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Robert Frost, "The Gift Outright," in *The Poetry of Robert Frost*, ed. Edward Connery Lathem (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), 348.

Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power* (New York: Wiley, 1960), 24.

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Shaun O'Connell, "The Infrequent Family: In Search of Boston's Literary Community," *Boston Magazine* 67, no. 1 (January 1975): 44–47.

5. The journal uses shortened references rather than op. cit. For a book, include last name(s) of author(s); short title containing key word(s) of main title; and page number(s) of reference. For an article in a periodical, include last name(s) of author(s); short title of article; and page number(s). For example:

Frost, "The Gift Outright," 348.

Neustadt, *Presidential Power*, 24.

O'Connell, "Infrequent Family," 44–47.

6. We are happy to answer any questions about these guidelines. Address queries and manuscripts to:

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